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CAUSERIES DU LUNDI

(July, 1850—September, 1850)

CAUSERIES DU LUNDI

By
C. A. SAINTE-BEUVE

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MADAME DU CHÂTELET¹

Monday, July 8, 1850.

I owe, to begin with, a few words of explanation in reply to more than one question which has been asked in different senses. What is my aim and intention in frequently returning to these seventeenth and eighteenth century subjects? Is it my aim to set up models? Not exactly; but I would like to help especially in keeping up, in renewing tradition, without which nothing is possible in good literature; and, after that, what is more simple than to try to reattach this tradition to the last link? If many things were already corrupt at the end of the seventeenth and during the whole of the eighteenth century, the language at least was still good, the prose-style was still found to be excellent when it was Voltaire and his near neighbours who were talking and writing. I should wish that we submitted ourselves, I should like to submit myself, in the first place, to the discipline of that clear, neat and fluent language. I should wish that, in our intercourse with those intellectual men or women of a century ago, we talked again as they talked once, easily, politely if possible, and without too much magniloquence. One of the faults of the new generations (whose good qualities by the way I do not dispute) is that they imagine that they date from themselves, that they have no antecedents, that they are in general disdainful of the past, systematic, and consequently, stiff and rude, or even a little wild. I should like to see the younger writers gradually discipline and moderate themselves to that simpler style, to those lively and facile ways of speaking which were once reputed the only ways in French.

With respect to the morality of the eighteenth century in many cases I reprove it. If there are any readers (and

¹ Continuation of *Voltaire at Cirey*.

I think I know some) who would like to see me reprove it more frequently and more sharply, I will observe to them that I am much more successful when I incite them to condemn it, than if I anticipate them and appear to try to force a judgment upon them on every occasion, which in the long run is tedious and always offensive in a critic. The reader is rather fond of thinking that he is more severe than the critic ; I will leave him that pleasure. To me it suffices to recount and faithfully expound, in such a way that each may profit by the things of the intellect and good language, and be enabled to do justice to the other quite moral parts which I have no intention of concealing.

To-day I will continue to speak of Voltaire and his friend Mme. Du Châtelet, whom we regard as inseparable from him during fifteen years. In my account of Mme. de Graigny I was only able to give some passing glimpses of her, and that from her least favourable side. Mme. Du Châtelet was not an ordinary person ; in higher literature and philosophy she occupies a rank which it was easier for the women of her day to smile at than to deny her. The love, the friendship that Voltaire had for her was founded on admiration, on an admiration which never ceased ; and a man like Voltaire was never so much in love that his mind could be long deceived by his heart. Mme. Du Châtelet must then have had some real claims to that admiration of an excellent judge, and her chief claim to it was that she was so long able to hold and to charm him to that extent.

By her own name she was Mlle. de Breteuil, born in 1706, twelve years younger than Voltaire. She had had a serious education, and learned Latin as a child. Married to the Marquis Du Châtelet, she at first lived the life of her time, the life of the Regency period, and the Duc de Richelieu was able to inscribe her on the list of his brilliant conquests. Voltaire, who had met her all along, did not become closely intimate with her until after his return from England, about 1733. He was thirty-nine and Mme. Du Châtelet twenty-seven. Their minds harmonized and were taken with each other. At this time Voltaire felt it to be his mission to naturalize English ideas in France, the philosophical principles he had imbibed from the reading of Locke, and in the society of Bolingbroke ; but

above all, having appreciated the soundness and immensity of Newton's discovery, and ashamed to see France still wasting its time in empty systems, while the full light was shining elsewhere, he endeavoured to propagate the true doctrine of the knowledge of the world, with which he mingled ideas of philosophic Deism. Mme. Du Châtelet was the woman to second him, nay, to precede him on this path.

She loved the exact sciences and felt herself drawn to them by a true vocation. Having begun to study mathematics, first with Maupertuis, then more thoroughly with Clairaut, she made remarkable progress in them and soon outstripped Voltaire, who was satisfied with admiring though unable to follow her. Mme. Du Châtelet published some *Institutions de Physique*, in which she expounded the particular ideas of Leibnitz; but her chief claim is her translation into French of Newton's immortal *Principles*; she added to it an algebraic Commentary, in which Clairaut had a hand. Thus, by inscribing her name at the foot of Newton's work, she seemed already to announce M. de Laplace's method of exposition. What an honour for a woman to be able to slip her name in between two such names!

For that honour Mme. Du Châtelet would have paid rather dearly in her lifetime, if she had been susceptible to mockery and epigrams. In ancient times the fair Hypatia, a celebrated mathematician and astronomer, was stoned to death at Alexandria by the populace. Mme. Du Châtelet, who was, it seems, less beautiful, and who had not besides all Hypatia's virtues, was not like her stoned, but she was exposed to the refined mockery of the society in which she lived, the wittiest and most spiteful of societies. I do not think that there exists in French a more cutting, a more bitterly and cruelly satirical page, than the Portrait of Mme. Du Châtelet, the *divine Emilie*, drawn by Mme. Du Deffand (an intimate friend), which begins with these words: 'Imagine a tall and thin woman, without, etc., etc.'. This Portrait should be read in Grimm's version, since it is mutilated and *toned down* in the others; we do not dare to transcribe it, for fear of burning the paper. It appears to have been drawn in cold blood by a Fury who is able to write, and who engraves every touch with a pen dipped in gall and vitriol.

In every line she finds the pitiless word. The poor victim is denied, not only the naturalness of her virtues, but even that of her faults. The final touch is at the same time the most perfidious and the most humiliating; she is shown as clinging with all her might to Voltaire's celebrity: 'It is he who makes her the object of public attention and the subject of private conversations; it is to him that she will be beholden for living in the ages to come, and, meanwhile, she owes him the *means of living* in the present age'.

To complete the satire, after this Portrait of Mme. Du Châtelet by Mme. Du Deffand, one should read the Letters of Mme. de Staal (De Launay) to the same Mme. Du Deffand, in which is described, so naturally and so spitefully, the arrival of Mme. Du Châtelet and Voltaire one evening at the Duchesse du Maine's in the château of Anet: 'They appear at the stroke of midnight like two ghosts, with an odour of embalmed corpses'. They amuse the society by their airs and absurdities, they irritate them by their eccentricities; working all day, he at history, she at Newton, they will neither play nor promenade: 'They are indeed ciphers in a company where their learned writings are of no profit'. Mme. Du Châtelet especially can find no place retired enough, no chamber silent enough for her meditations:

'Mme. Du Châtelet has twice changed her room since yesterday, writes Mme. de Staal; she could not stand the one she had chosen any longer; there was noise, *smoke without fire*, which seems to me to be her emblem. The noise does not trouble her at night, as she told me, but in the day-time, in the midst of her work; it disturbs her ideas. She is at present revising her *Principles*; that is an exercise she repeats every year, otherwise they might escape her, and perhaps fly so far that she could not recover a single one of them. I think indeed that her head is for them a house of correction, and not the place of their birth; they have to be carefully watched. She prefers the good air of this occupation to every kind of amusement, and persists in not appearing till nightfall. Voltaire has composed some gallant verses which make up a little for the ill effect of their unusual conduct'.

Here we have the tone of that satire under the wittiest and most delicate of feminine pens. On reading these Letters of Mme. de Staal to Mme. Du Deffand, one cannot

help remarking, in the midst of this superficially the most civilized and agreeable of societies, the pitiful nature of that slanderous gaiety of two women in want of amusement, the intellectual and moral vacuum that underlies this evil-speaking which is due to idleness rather than spite, their bitter and sterile coldness. It was time at last that fire should fall from heaven and kindle all this dry straw to renew the earth.

Mme. Du Châtelet escaped at least these outside annoyances, and her noble studies, her lofty distractions themselves put her out of reach of the petty carpings which consumed such distinguished minds around her. Voltaire was perhaps mistaken and blinded when he wrote: 'Never was there a lady so learned as she, and no lady ever merited less to be called a *femme savante*. . . . The ladies who played with her at the Queen's were far from suspecting that they were so near Newton's Commentator: they took her for an ordinary person'. But he is right when he adds: 'Everything that occupies society was of her province, *except evil-speaking*. One never heard her turning anybody into ridicule. She had neither time nor inclination to remark absurdities; and if anybody told her that certain persons had not done her justice, she replied that she was ready to overlook it'. Though Mme. Du Châtelet's mathematics served no other purpose than to give her this moral superiority, that was something.

We may judge her directly by letters of hers, by writings on morality in which she depicts herself. We will then leave anecdotes aside, and refer the curious to them, and listen to her own words. From the first periods of the close intimacy between Mme. Du Châtelet and Voltaire (1734), the latter, taking alarm at a warning which had reached him, thought it necessary to leave Cirey in the middle of winter, and for greater security had crossed into Holland. In the ardour of her anxiety Mme. Du Châtelet writes to the tender friend of her friend, M. d'Argental, to entreat him to set matters straight and bring about the return of him without whom she cannot live. These letters, published in 1806 by M. Hochet, are pathetic and at times admirable in their tone and passion; the very first words betray the woman that loves:

'I am a hundred and fifty leagues from your friend, and

It is twelve days since I heard from him. Pardon, pardon ; but my state is horrible. . . .

'Only a fortnight ago I could not spend two hours out of his sight without anxiety ; I used to write to him from my room to his ; and for a fortnight I have not known where he is, what he is doing ; I cannot even enjoy the sad comfort of sharing his misfortunes. Pardon me for troubling you with my laments ; but I am too unhappy'.

She fears a danger, but she does not quite know what. Mme. Du Châtelet suspects that this threat may have been a blow aimed at her to frighten Voltaire, to drive him away and disturb their happiness. In each of her letters we see how much she distrusts the poet's prudence when away from her, abandoned without guidance to all his irritabilities, to his petulance and first impulses ; 'Believe me, she says to d'Argental, do not leave him long in Holland ; he will be prudent at first, but remember :

'Qu'il est peu de vertus qui résistent sans cesse'.

If she had read La Fontaine as much as she had Newton she would have quoted, for the occasion, those charming lines of the bonhomme, which fit Voltaire and all his kind so well :

Puis fiez-vous à rimeur qui répond
D'un seul monent ! Dieu ne fit la sagesse
Pour les cerveaux qui hantent les neuf Sœurs ;
Trop bien ont-ils quelque art qui vous peut plaire,
Quelque jargon plein d'assez de douceurs,
Mais d'être sûrs ce n'est là leur affaire.

She never ceases to recommend him, through d'Argental, caution and *incognito*. *Incognito* for Voltaire, that man, that child in love with celebrity ! We see how much she clings to life and happiness with him, to a happiness *for always*. She fears that in Holland he may become accustomed to do without her ; freedom has great charms, so have the Dutch publishers, those publishers who tempt you to print and say anything. Her continual recommendation is to be prudent over there, not to permit himself too many liberties in his Dutch editions, in order that he may come back and enjoy felicity with her at Cirey : 'Above all, let him not put the *Mondain* into them !' (Charming *Mondain* ! that was a State affair at that time,

and the future of a man depended upon it.)—‘At every moment, she exclaims, he must be saved from himself, and I use more statesmanship to guide him than the whole Vatican to keep Christendom in its fetters’. This latter touch is at least solemn and may appear disproportionate, but in that way passion argues. At the same time Mme. Du Châtelet will speak of him as of a child, with solicitude, with tenderness: ‘We are sometimes *very stubborn*, she says with a smile, and this demon of a reputation which I think very intrusive will not leave us’. In these letters to d’Argental we find the passionate and tender Mme. Du Châtelet, the one Voltaire has so well described in two words, *a bit of a philosopher and shepherdess*.

Her accents are sincere, and do not displease even in excess. At one moment she magnifies the dangers to herself; her imagination goes so far as to picture Voltaire unsafe even in Holland: ‘I know not, she writes to d’Argental, if you will deign to reassure me with regard to this fear, you will think that I am going out of my mind. *I am a miser robbed of his whole hoard, who fears every moment that it will be thrown into the sea*’.

Voltaire in Holland continues to do imprudent things and to obey his nature; he sends to the Prince Royal of Prussia (afterwards the great Frederick) a manuscript work on *Metaphysics*, and this *Metaphysics*, if printed, is of a nature to ruin its author for ever. Mme. Du Châtelet is sensible of the mistake he is making; she complains of it to d’Argental with sadness and eloquence:

‘If a friend of twenty years standing had asked him for this manuscript, he should refuse it; and he sends it to a stranger and a *prince*! Why, besides, should he make his tranquillity depend on another, and that without any need, through the silly vanity (for I cannot disguise the proper word) of showing, to one who is not a judge, a work in which he will see only imprudence? One who so lightly entrusts his secret deserves to be betrayed; *but what have I done that he should make the happiness of my life depend upon the Prince Royal?* I confess that I am indignant. . .’.

That is the complaint of a lover who is in her right; but, at the same moment, she loves him; she calls him ‘*a creature so lovable in every respect*’; she sees none but him in the universe, and proclaims him without too much

prejudice 'the finest ornament of France'. Somewhere this happy expression escapes her: 'For my part, I believe that the people who persecute him have never read him'. She is evidently charmed and under a spell: love, to enter her heart, entered by way of the mind.

A reflection, however, offers itself, and it did not fail to occur to her too: what temerity to entrust her happiness, her destiny, her whole future as a woman to a man of letters, to one who was so much a man of letters as Voltaire, to a poet who was so much of a poet, to the mercy, every morning, of his irritable temper! The destiny of these two united beings was thus ever and again exposed to the chance of a fit of vanity or petulance.

Of those perpetual disturbances which Voltaire's pranks brought into Mme. Du Châtelet's existence, the good souls of the day never ceased to talk; they pitied her loudly; the President Hénault, one of her best friends, one day wrote to Mme. Du Deffand: 'The poor Du Châtelet should insert into the leases of all the houses she lets the clause of all Voltaire's follies. Truly, it is incredible how one can be so inconsiderate'.

She was more to be pitied than he in fact, even in those misfortunes which affected both of them; she had fewer sources of comfort. There is a pretty saying of Saint-Lambert, another man of letters if ever there was one and who ought to know. Somebody in his presence was pitying Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who had been obliged to flee: 'Do not pity him too much, he said, he travels with his mistress *Reputation*'. That mistress is always the more or less secret rival of the other mistress who thinks she is reigning.

If you are a woman, if you are wise, and if your heart, whilst catching fire, still takes time to choose, listen to a piece of advice: love neither Voltaire, nor Jean-Jacques, nor Goethe, nor Chateaubriand, if you chance to come across such great men in your path. Love . . . whom then? Love one who will simply and fully return your love, love one who has a whole heart to offer you, though he have no celebrated name and be called merely the Chevalier Des Grieux. An honest Des Grieux and a virtuous Manon, that is the ideal of those who know how to be happy in silence: glory as a third party in intimacy will only spoil all.

But we may well talk, we moralists, and the things of this life are not regulated in that perfect measure. Mme. Du Châtelet loves Voltaire, and, whilst herself conscious of everything, she proceeds and is carried away. In reality he prefers (and she knows it well) to publish his *Metaphysics* and bring it to light, rather than sacrifice it noiselessly to love and good sense : he is indeed the man of letters in his true nature. And she who laments, does she not love him a little on account of all that, for 'those laurels which follow him everywhere' ? In vain she adds : 'But what good is so much glory to him ? an obscure happiness would be very much better'. If he has chosen and embraced that obscurity which she desires for him, she would perhaps not have chosen him, and no doubt she would love him less.

Let us then allow things to take their course, and content ourselves with seeing them as they are. That was the point, however, where finally this liaison between Mme. Du Châtelet and Voltaire came to grief : the latter was more a man of letters than a lover. At bottom Voltaire was not, and could not be, a real lover. His admiration was intellectual, and he was above all capable of friendship. Almost from the beginning of his connexion with Mme. Du Châtelet, he might have spoken and repeated to her those charming lines :

Si vous voulez que j'aime encore,
Rendez-moi l'âge des amours. . . .

She accepted, however, this unequal, and to a certain extent painful, situation ; for years she showed herself constant and faithful. It was Voltaire's wrongs and, if I may say so, his literary infidelities, which insensibly detached her. As early as February, 1735, during that visit to Holland, she had cause to complain of him ; he has much more at heart the publication of his books and philosophy, cost what it may, than to return to the friend who calls and implores :

'It is frightful to have to complain about him, she writes to d'Argental ; it is a torture I was ignorant of. If you still have some pity for me, write to him ; he will not want to blush in your eyes : I entreat you on my knees. . . . If you had seen his last letter, you would not condemn me ; it is signed, and he calls me *Madame* ! It is such a strange incongruity that my head swam with grief'.

A few years later he was again guilty of similar conduct. In 1738, for example, at the time when Mme. de Grafigny dropped into the circle at Cirey, Voltaire was in one of those crises and literary fits which 'entirely altered the *charming sweetness of his manners*'. A libel by the Abbé Des Fontaines had driven him beside himself to such a degree that at every post by which he received letters he wanted to start off for Paris, to see the ministers, the criminal magistrate, to present a petition, lodge a complaint and I know not what, carry his vengeance to the point of extinction. Mme. Du Châtelet was unable to restore him to calm and to persuade him that the happiness of two elect beings, cultivating together philosophy and letters, cannot depend upon some miserable insult coming from so low a quarter. The earthly paradise of Cirey was become a hell of vexations and anxieties: 'Truly it is very hard, she wrote to d'Argental, to spend one's life battling in the bosom of retirement and happiness. *Mon Dieu*, if he took your advice and mine, how happy he would be!'

It was much worse when, three or four years later, during their visit to Brussels on the occasion of Mme. Du Châtelet's law-suit, Voltaire completely escapes from her to throw himself into politics. He had taken it into his head to undertake a secret mission from the French ministry to the King of Prussia. I know not what diplomatic ambition, the temptation of a different career, perhaps merely the attraction of novelty, have seized upon him at the time; he starts off, he visits the little principalities; he goes from Berlin to Brunswick, to Baireuth (October, 1743): 'He is absolutely intoxicated, he is *mad* about the Courts and Germany'. The King of Prussia is evidently Mme. Du Châtelet's great rival at this time; a singular rival, she adds bitterly. She remains whole weeks without news from her friend; she learns his comings and goings only through the Gazettes; her heart is wounded:

'How many things to reproach him with! and how far his heart is from mine! . . . To have to complain of him is a kind of torture that I used not to know. . . . All that I have experienced during the last month would perhaps alienate any other but myself; but, if he can make me unhappy, he cannot diminish my sensibility. . . . His heart has much reparation to make, if it is still worthy of mine'.

Evidently, and whatever she may say, she is becoming detached. Those painful impressions were perhaps softened down and covered over during the following years, when Voltaire, his first caprice exhausted, seemed to have returned within the magic circle of Cirey; but there remained a sad and acquired conviction of it at the bottom of Mme. Du Châtelet's heart. We find the trace and testimony of it in a little Treatise *On Happiness*, which she wrote about this time.

This little Treatise, which contains some sound and lofty reflections, some delicate remarks, rendered in a clear and animated style, with a true talent for expression, has one fault: it is dry and positive; it has that stamp of crudity which displeases so much among the best pages of the eighteenth century, the effect of which is that the wisdom there preached is not the true wisdom. Oh! how far it seems to be from Plato's inspiration, how completely his divine charm has vanished! To be happy, says Mme. Du Châtelet, it is necessary '*to have got rid of prejudices, to be virtuous, to keep well; to have tastes and passions, to be susceptible of illusion*'. She begins by laying down as a principle 'that we have nothing to do in this world except *to procure agreeable sensations and feelings*'. That may be true philosophically; but, presented in such a way and so crudely, a proposition of that nature, in the form of a theorem, has an unmoral and quite physical look which is displeasing and almost offensive. Mme. Du Châtelet makes a great distinction between *prejudices* and *illusions*; she would suppress the former and preserve the latter. Illusions seem to her *necessary*; she thinks one should harbour them; that, instead of dispersing them, 'one should *thicken the varnish* which they lay upon most objects'. But the property of illusions is that they *are*, and cannot be adopted at will. Did the light rainbow which they cast over things ever resemble a more or less *thick* coating of *varnish* that one lays on at will? Mme. Du Châtelet thinks the passions are necessary for happiness; in default of passions she demands at least inclinations. Among these passions and inclinations, on which she reasons very well and with a perfect knowledge of her matter, are some which she introduces among the others on an almost equal footing, unpleasant passions, like gluttony and gambling. Of love she speaks with truth

and justness, but without that delicate tact which respects it. She strongly insists upon the positive direction that one should trace out and follow, without regret, without repentance, without looking back after once resolving to go forward; one should *start from where one is* and will what one wills: 'Let us decide, she says in conclusion, on the way we wish to go to spend our life, and try to sow flowers upon it'. *Let us try*, indeed; but this effort is too marked, and this so determined intention to sow flowers is quite enough to prevent their coming out. Speaking generally, this whole treatise *On Happiness* just lacks some of those very flowers of which Euripides' Hippolytus speaks, flowers still quite wet with dew, which have been plucked in *the meadow watered by Modesty*¹.

In the front rank among the conditions for happiness, Mme. Du Châtelet places that of *keeping well*: that is correct, but she says it as a physicist would, and without charm. Simonides expressed it better in some lines of which the following is the sense: 'Health is the first of blessings for mortal man; the second is to be beautiful by nature; the third is to be rich without fraud; and the fourth is to be in the flower of youth among friends'. Those treatises in which theory labours to demonstrate in detail the *machines* and the *industries* of happiness, and to invent at great pains what is born of itself in season, remind me of a pretty saying of d'Alembert, which does not smack too much of the geometrician: 'Philosophy has taken much pains, he says, to compose Treatises on *old age* and *friendship*, because nature without any assistance composes treatises on *youth* and *love*'.

There are some passages, however, in Mme. Du Châtelet's Treatise which are well felt and expressed: she speaks worthily of study, which, 'of all the passions is that which contributes most to our happiness; for it is of all the passions that which makes it depend least upon others'. She points with elevation, as in a far distance she aspires to, to the noble aim of glory. She speaks very well too, nudity apart, and in an animated and sincere manner, of love; she proclaims it the first of blessings, if one is privileged to attain it, the only one which merits that

¹ Sur l'absence complète de pudeur chez Mme. Du Châtelet, il faut voir les *Mémoires* de Longchamp, lorsqu'elle se fait servir par lui étant nue au bain et sans prendre garde qu'il est un homme.

even study should be sacrificed to it. She might here almost say with the poet :

Il est, il serait tout, s'il ne devait finir !

She traces for herself the ideal of two persons 'so much made for each other, that they should never know satiety nor coolness'. But such a complete harmony between two beings appears to her too beautiful : 'A heart capable of such a love, she says, a soul so tender and so constant, seems to have overtaxed the power of the Divinity ; one such is born in a century ; it would seem to be beyond its powers to produce two, or, if it had produced them, it would appear to be jealous of their pleasures, if they should come together'. And, coming down to a less equal and less lofty union, she holds that love may still make us happy at less cost ; 'that a feeling and tender soul is happy through the mere pleasure it finds in loving'. Here she is evidently thinking of herself ; she flatters herself on having received from Heaven one of those tender and *unchangeable* souls (there we see the stamp of illusion), that can content themselves with a single passion, even when it is no longer shared, and which remain ever faithful to a memory :

'I was happy for ten years, she confesses, through the love of him who had subjugated my soul, and those ten years I spent in intimacy with him, without a moment of dislike and languor. When age and infirmities diminished his inclination, I was long unaware of it : *I loved for two* ; I passed my whole life with him, and my heart, free from suspicions, enjoyed the pleasure of loving and the illusion of thinking itself loved. It is true that I have lost this so happy state, and not without the cost of many tears'.

When writing these pages, she still flattered herself that she would continue in what she called the *unchangeableness* of her heart, and that the peaceful feeling of friendship, joined to the passion for study, would suffice to make her happy. She was quite forty years old, and, Stoic and geometrician as she was, she might think herself safe in port, when having gone with Voltaire to spend a portion of the years 1747 and 1748 at Commercy and Lunéville, at the little Court of Lorraine, this is, in a few words, what happened.

She met there, in the society of the Marquise de Boufflers, a man of thirty, refined, agreeable, witty, though with a rather dry and arid wit, then only known by an *Epistle to Chloe*, a pretty enough poem in the sensual style; that was M. de Saint-Lambert. He was gallant towards her; she forgot for him her philosophic reflections, or rather she remembered them: feeling passion again rising within her, she took it at its word, and, putting her principles in action, she yielded to them. The consequences of this new liaison are sufficiently well known; there followed the semi-grotesque, unbecoming and disastrous love-affair, which so much occupied the attention of society at the time, and which brought on the death of Mme. Du Châtelet, at Lunéville, six days after her confinement, on September 10, 1749.

In a remarkable work on Mme. Du Châtelet, Mme. Louise Colet has published some letters from her to Saint-Lambert, as well as the latter's replies. These letters of Mme. Du Châtelet are, it must be confessed, charming and truly tender; under the sway of a true feeling a kind of revival of thought and youth appears to have taken place in her. At the same time she knows in her heart what sort of a man Saint-Lambert is; he is young, light-hearted, and she is distrustful:

'You have strong inclinations, she wrote to him one day on her departure, but you do not yet know love. I am sure that to-day you will be gayer and more witty than ever you were at Lunéville, and this idea grieves me independently of all anxiety. If you are to love me only feebly, if your heart is not capable of giving itself unreservedly, of devoting itself to me alone, of loving me in short without bounds and without measure, *what will you do then with mine?* . . . you will write to me, no doubt, but it will cost you an effort to write. . . . I am much afraid that your mind thinks more of a delicate witticism than your heart of a tender feeling; in short, I fear that I am wrong in loving you so much. I feel that I am contradicting myself, and that means reproaching myself for my inclination for you. But my reflections, my struggles, all my feelings, all my thoughts, prove to me that I love you more than I should'.

These letters to Saint-Lambert are evidently the expression of a younger heart than those we have already seen, in which she showed such an active anxiety about Voltaire.

Under the inspiration of an unexpected passion we might say that this soul, long constrained, is suddenly reborn and rejoices; it recommences. There are sentiments expressed with an extreme delicacy. 'My letter, which is at Nancy, will please you more than this; I did not love you more, but I had more strength to tell you so: *it was not so long since I had left you!*' The publication of these Letters was necessary for the rehabilitation of Mme, Du Châtelet's memory, after the scandal caused by her last infidelity.

As to Saint-Lambert's letters, they are rather calculated to set off those of the passionate woman, but not to justify her inclination for him. He is dry and smart when he speaks to her, and there is no true tenderness; the tone throughout is brisk and dashing, it is the tone of a dragoon or a guardsman who is at the same time a wit. He calls her *my dear Heart*, he perpetually addresses her in the second person singular; he speaks pretentiously of his own *melancholy*. In short, it is the woman here who is superior, as is so often the case, and she shows her inferiority only in having mistaken the object of her choice.

The sensation caused by Mme. Du Châtelet's mishap was the beginning of Saint-Lambert's reputation and gave him a brilliant start in society. The impression on Voltaire of her death was painful and does honour to his sensibility. His secretary Longchamp has told us very minutely how the whole incident affected him from the beginning, his first anger and fury at seeing himself deceived, his subsequent half-laughable, half-pathetic resignation. The loss of Mme. Du Châtelet drew real tears from him, soon interrupted by some of those lively, petulant, and sensible words, which he could not help uttering, and which might make one inclined to apply to him, in parody, the words of Homer: *He wept while bursting with laughter*. Thus, two or three days after her death, as he was very anxious about a ring which the Marquise wore, and which should have enclosed his portrait under the bezel, Longchamp told him that he had, in fact, taken the precaution to withdraw this ring, but that the portrait it enclosed was Saint-Lambert's: 'O heavens! exclaimed Voltaire, raising and joining his two hands, see what women are! I ousted Richelieu, Saint-Lambert drove me out; that is in the order of things;

one nail drives out another : that is the way of the world'.

Mme. Du Châtelet had hardly closed her eyes, when Voltaire wrote to Mme. Du Deffand before anybody else, to announce this death to her : 'In my despair I have recourse to the sensibility of your heart'. Remember the satirical portrait ; in truth, the friend in despair addressed himself to the right person !

Mme. Du Châtelet's death broke Voltaire's existence and endangered his life. Deprived of the friend who attached him and held the rudder for him, he did not know what was to become of him nor where to find an anchorage. He was on the point of doing something rash. His first idea was to retire to the Abbey of Sénones, to live with Dom Calmet, and bury himself in study ; his second idea was to go to Lord Bolingbroke in England, to devote himself to philosophy. He first took a wiser course, which was to go to Paris to talk of Mme. Du Châtelet with d'Argental and the Duc de Richelieu, and to find distraction in having his tragedies played before him in his own house. But the cajoleries of the King of Prussia, which Mme. Du Châtelet had conjured to the best of her power as long as she was alive, returned to tempt him ; he could no longer resist them, and he went to undergo, at the age of fifty-six, that last and dismal *schooling* in Prussia, after which he reappeared less agitated, and apparently a little wiser.

BÉRANGER¹

Monday, July 15, 1850.

THE other day I was speaking of Voltaire, let us speak a little of Béranger; nothing is more natural. Why should we not treat Béranger in all respects like Voltaire, that is to say, without overrating him this time, without flattery and seeing him as he is, as we think we know him? He will still come off very well. We have all of us, nearly all of us, once professed for Béranger more than admiration, it was a cult; this cult he repaid in a certain sense, since he himself worshipped public opinion and popularity. Has the time not come to unravel a little all those affections, all those flatteries, to pay to the man, to the honest man who has, like all of us, more or less, his faults and his foibles, to the poet who, however perfect we may suppose him to be, has also his defects, to pay him, I say, his full due, but a due that is measured by the same standard and in the same scales as we use for others? Once again, the portion which is justly his among his contemporaries will be, after all allowance has been made, one of the finest and most enviable.

In order to silence those who might remember that I once, more than fifteen years ago, drew a portrait of Béranger which was all light without any shade, I will reply that that is the very reason I wish to paint it over again. Fifteen years is long enough for the model to change or at least to become more distinct; it is, above all, long enough for the man who attempts a painting to correct, to form himself, in a word to thoroughly modify himself. As a young man I put a great deal of affection and enthusiasm into the portraits of the poets I drew and I do not repent it; I even intentionally put a little forbearance into them.

¹ Béranger's *Songs* (new edition).

To-day I am moved, I confess, only by a sincere wish to see and delineate the things and persons as they are, at least as at this moment they appear to me.

Béranger's Songs might be divided into four or five branches : First, the old-fashioned song, as we find it before him in Collé, Panard, Désaugiers, the gay, bacchic, epicurean song, the merry, bold, wanton kind, *Le Roi d'Yvetot*, *La Gaudriole*, *Frétillon*, *Madame Grégoire* : he began with this kind. Secondly, the sentimental song, the ballad, *Le Bon Vieillard*, *Le Voyageur*, especially *Les Hirondelles* ; this vein is very delicate and at times very pure. Thirdly, the liberal and patriotic song, which was and will remain his great innovation, that species of little ode in which he had the art of combining a thread of his tender vein with the public sentiments of which he made himself the mouth-piece ; this kind, which constitutes Béranger's full originality and as it were the centre of his talent, includes *Le Dieu des Bonnes Gens*, *Mon Ame*, *La Bonne Vieille*, in which tender inspiration gives the tone ; *Le Vieux Sergent*, *Le Vieux Drapeau*, *La Sainte Alliance des Peuples*, etc., where the liberal accent dominates. Fourthly, we should add a purely satiric branch, in which the vein of sentimentality is no longer found, in which he attacks without reserve, malignantly, bitterly, acrimoniously his adversaries of the day, the supporters of the ministry, the fat men of the centre, the brood of Loyola, the Pope himself and the Vatican ; this branch would comprise the songs from *Le Ventru* to *Les Clefs du Paradis*. Fifthly and lastly, a superior branch which Béranger only produced in his later years, and which was a last effort and as it were a last graft of that literary, delicate and hard-working talent, the ballad-song, purely poetical and philosophical, like *Les Bohémiens*, or with already a slight colouring of socialism, as *Les Contrebandiers*, *Le Virux Vagabond*.

There we have a number of kinds, and that seems to exhaust them : we are assured, however, that Béranger still keeps in his portfolio a last more elevated, almost epic form of song : poems in *ottava rima* on Napoleon, on the various epochs of the Empire. Those of his friends who know of them speak of them with unmixed admiration. One day, four or five years ago, I heard M. de La Mennais say of them : " I consider them finer than anything he has done hitherto, but he refuses to publish any of them.

For my part (he added with a smile and alluding to his own impatience to publish), if I had written a single one of those octaves, it would have been all over the world ; but he does not want to be brought again before the tribunal ; that is more prudent perhaps and wiser ”.

Confining ourselves to what we have, it is certain that Béranger has made the very most of the song ; he has extracted from it all that it contains, and one might think that it would be very difficult henceforth to attempt that kind after him without imitating him. In his hands, the old French song, light, mocking, satiric, not content with reclothing itself in a severer rhythm, has become transformed in spirit and elevated ; those who loved before everything its frank, roguish and at the same time harmless gaiety, may have found that in him it lost some of that character. From this point of view of a naïve gaiety, of frank and honest bonhomie, the amiable Désaugiers remains superior to him. Even as a song-writer Béranger has too much art, too much craft and calculation, he thinks of too many things at a time, to be perfectly and innocently gay. He has advanced the song as far as it is able to go and where it ceases to be itself. That is his glory ; it implies a slight defect.

Béranger has composed songs, and better than songs : but has he on that account made perfect odes ? Here is a literary question which has hardly ever been touched, since it was so immediately and unanimously agreed that Béranger was a classic like Horace, and the only classic among living poets.

I have just re-read (re-read, it is true, and not sung) almost the whole of Béranger's Collection of songs, and I have gained the conviction that with him the first idea, the conception of the piece, is almost always charming and poetical, but that the execution, in consequence of the difficulties of rhythm and refrain, in consequence also of several literary habits connected with his time or with his manner, often leaves something to be wished. To render evident these observations of detail I cannot do better than take one by one some of his finest and most celebrated pieces, and to explain my idea.

Le Roi d'Yvetot, with which he opened in May, 1813, seems to be perfect ; not a word that is not to the point, that does not enter into the rhythm and the tone ; it is

poetic, natural and gay ; rhyme and reason happily and playfully harmonize.

La Bacchante, a celebrated song in his first manner which already aims at the ode, offers some defects of style which are by no means to be explained by the disturbance due to wildness and passion. I pass over the *atours*, a remnant of the old style :

. . . Pourquoi ces *atours*
Entre tes baisers et mes charmes ?

But the last verse is very obscure, and it is so by its reasoning, which is not natural in the situation in which the Bacchante finds herself. She persuades her lover to drink less, to spare that nectar which enervates him, and she adds :

De mes désirs mal apaisés,
Ingrat, si tu pouvais te plaindre,
J'aurais du moins, pour les éteindre,
Le vin où je les ai puisés.

How twisted it is ! The theme being rather delicate, I will not dwell on this obscurity which may have half entered into the author's intention, but which, I am sure, many a reader finds it difficult to unravel. However, to substantiate at once this charge of obscurity, since it may return again, I will here quote, in a quite opposite kind of poem, that verse of *L'Epée de Damoclès*, in which the poet attacks Louis XVIII in the person of Dionysios the Tyrant :

Tu crois du Pinde avoir conquis la gloire,
Quand ses lauriers, de ta foudre encor chauds,
Vont à prix d'or te cacher à l'histoire,
Ou balayer la fange des cachots. . . .

This verse remains in the state of a pure logogriph.—I resume the series of the first songs.

La Gaudriole, which he has so well sung, enlivens the majority of the pieces of that period. This ribaldry which, at bottom and in spite of serious thoughts, is so natural to him, plays and circulates in all the poems of his first manner ; it traverses those of the second ; it turns up even in his last. In the midst of this more serious Collection of 1833, there is a song, *Ma Nourrice*, which recalls that of *Ma Grand' Mère* ; he who wrote the one must have

written the other. From the point of view of popular morality, I will content myself with remarking that it is not very nice perhaps to compromise to such a degree, in a ribald type, those two so estimable persons, one's *nurse* and one's *grandmother*.

But Béranger, it must not be forgotten, is of Gallic race, and the race of the Gaul, even in its most poetic moments, lacks reserve and chastity: look at Voltaire, Molière, La Fontaine, and Rabelais and Villon, the ancestors. They all share that character which makes a man flout the sublime and snap his fingers at what is sacred, as long as he is able to do so. With respect to the poet in question, I will confine myself to a simple general remark which I think is in conformity with experience.

When a man has once, at an already mature age, sung and celebrated ribaldry and conviviality to such an extent, and has revelled in it with such exquisite art and such delightful roguishness, he may do and say what he pleases afterwards, he may hide it under the gravest exteriors and combine it with very elevated and very sincere sentiments; but it is and will ever remain at the bottom of his soul a thing to be considered, the hidden imp that laughs in his sleeve, that trifles and baffles. *

Frétillon gives us the perfection of the purely wanton spirit; it is the airy trifle, the saucy and licentious *nothing* in all its grace. *Le Petit Homme Gris* too is very pretty, very light and gay. One does not quite know what it means in itself; it is a breath, a laugh, a fantasy. At every moment it grazes the strong word, the *plain*, literal word, but it stops itself in time. The refrains and the *motifs* of these little poems are charming: one is sensible of the *musa ales*, the wing of the sprite, a Gallic sprite who is not Ariel, but more licentious and already gamin, the sprite of ribaldry.

Madame Grégoire is a broad and frank song of the first manner. Béranger has written nothing better, in the way of pure song, than *Le Roi d'Yvetot* and *Madame Grégoire*.

Les Gueux, so highly praised, I like less. If it is merely a caprice, it is worthy of all admiration:

Les Gueux, les Gueux,
Sont les gens heureux,
Ils s'aiment entre eux. . . .

Do beggars indeed love each other more than other people, and because one possesses only a rag, is one less disposed to fight for it? I see a little declamation in this little piece and feebleness of thought :

D'un faste qui vous étonne
L'exil punit plus d'un grand . . .
D'un palais l'éclat vous frappe,
Mais l'ennui vient y gémir. . . .

Ennui yawns rather than *groans*. But all is quickly redeemed and recovered by the gaiety of the refrain, and by verses like the following :

Quel Dieu se plait et s'agite
Sur ce grabat qu'il fleurit ?
C'est l'Amour qui rend visite
A la Pauvreté qui rit.

Béranger has those happy lines which belong to the true poet and the painter, those bits of fresh and smiling pictures, as long as they are not too long drawn out. Thus in *Les Hirondelles* :

Au détour d'une eau qui chemine
A flots purs sous de frais lilas,
Vous avez vu notre chaumaine. . . .

Thus, in *Maudit Printemps*, when he regrets the winter, and would like one to hear :

Tinter sur la vitre sonore
Le grésil léger qui bondit.

Thus again, in *Le Voyage imaginaire*, that quite matutinal line :

J'ai sur l'Hymette éveillé les abeilles.

It is a whole heaven, a whole landscape in a line, and such a line makes up for many things. I say *makes up*, for, from the moment that we do not sing but read, the feeble, the common-place, the far-fetched and the obscure appear even in these little well worked tissues. The movement of the refrain carried off and saved the whole ; but, as soon as the balloon is no longer aloft and floating in the light, the eye seizes the defects, the fissures and the *seams*.

The *seams*, indeed, and shall we mention some of them ?

In *Le Vieux Célibataire*, for example, what does this line mean :

A mon coucher ton aimable présence
Pour ton bonheur ne sera pas sans fruit ?

Can anything be more unsuitable and more prosaic at the same time ? And further

Auprès de moi coule des jours paisibles ;
Que mille atours relèvent tes attraits.
L'Amour par eux m'a rendu sa puissance. . . .

Par eux, that is to say through thy attractions ; never was a less easy line composed with more difficulty. Very pretty and attractive is the refrain of *Le Vieux Célibataire* : *Allons, Babet . . .*, which clings to the memory and long continues to sing within us.

The latter remark would apply throughout ; it is renewed and verified for me in almost every one of Béranger's songs. The conception, ordinarily, the composition of these little frames, the *motif* is delightful, poetic ; it is the expression, the style that is often constrained and falls off. The spark under which his idea occurs to him he develops, he extends, he divides, but that, after all, remains the best part of his song. It is summed up in the refrain : through the refrain it came to him, and the refrain causes it to remain in the memory, often much superior to what it is in the working out.

Mon Habit is one of the songs one loves best to quote. One remembers the refrain and some charming lines of it.

La fleur des champs brille à ta boutonnière . . .
Ces jours mêlés de pluie et de soleil. . . .

It is very pretty in its motif, very rich in ideas, sometimes very happy in expression. And yet I cannot help remarking a few poor lines, some vague and commonplace expressions. Thus in the first verse :

Quand le Sort à ta mince étoffe
Livrerait de nouveaux combats.

And in the second verse, where he speaks of his friends :

Ton indigence qui m'honore
Ne m'a point banni de leurs bras.

Banished from the arms of his friends, is not that a very

academic expression for one who does not wish to be a member of the Academy? We might continue on this way of criticism on most of his poems, and I only point out the way. In *La Bonne Vieille*, the third verse still has a very declamatory and very academic movement:

D'un trait méchant se montra-t-il capable?
Avec orgueil vous répondrez : *Jamais !*

If he had said equally well *d'un trait malin*, the answer would have been : *Toujours*. That *Bonne Vieille* recalls without at all effacing it, a certain admirable sonnet of Ronsard to his mistress ; that does not prevent Béranger from giving Ronsard, who enjoyed little favour at that time, a little slap in the Preface to his 1833 collection. And I will add in passing that he seizes every occasion to aim a fillip at André Chénier, that young master so beyond reach by the breadth of his inspiration and the tissue of his style.

In *Le Dieu des Bonnes Gens* there is a lofty idea, moral even in a certain sense, in the sense of the Abbey of Thelema ; but does the execution respond to it in every respect? The third strophe appears at one moment to attain the sublime :

Un conquérant, dans sa fortune *altière*,
Se fit un jeu des sceptres et des lois ;
Et de ses pieds on peut voir la poussière
Empreinte encor sur le bandeau des rois.
Vous rampiez tous, O Rois qu'on *déifie* !
Moi, pour braver des maîtres *exigeants*,
Le verre en main gaïement je me confie
Au Dieu des bonnes gens.

Alas ! it is a pity : those kings who are *deified*, those *exacting* masters are only brought in by force and through the necessity of the refrain. The lofty and proud stanza is a little disfigured by the expressions. And in the fourth stanza it is much worse :

Sur nos débris *Albion nous défie*.

In the fifth the poet has exhausted his rhymes and his resources ; the French language has not more of them in poetry. He is obliged to strike false and distorted notes :

O Chérubins à la face bouffie,
Réveillez donc les morts *peu diligents* !

So, with all respect for the intention of *Le Dieu des Bonnes Gens*, I prefer, as a little example of perfection, the piece *Un jour le bon Dieu s'éveillant*. Béranger may try in vain to raise the genius of song, he only partially succeeds ; one cannot force the nature of things, nor what is inherent in the kind. After all he comes off best and is most completely successful in the semi-serious, semi playful kind. There, at least, if the word makes grimaces, the song adapts itself to them. He is more at home in the witty than in the grand style, though he attains the latter in flashes. From a literary point of view that is a very essential point, I think, and should be remembered. Let us limit ourselves to seeing his originality and his perfection where it really exists, whilst giving him credit for his other attempts. He excels only where wit is especially necessary : elsewhere, when continuous elevation would be required, he has flights, he exerts himself, he even has some sublime touches, but he also strains himself and makes false steps.

It has been so often said and repeated that Béranger has written something more and better than songs, that he has no doubt himself come to believe that his confining himself to that kind was only a matter of choice, and that he might, if he had willed it, have launched upon a wider career, and filled equally well, for example, the frame of the Idyll, of the poetic Meditation, or who knows ? the Epic. After studying his manner calmly, however, and without any political prejudice, without bringing to this reading anything foreign to the work itself, I have come to the conclusion that he was fortunate rather in having encountered on his path all those little channels and jets and backwaters of song, which appear to arrest him and give one the impression of a greater abundance and natural flow in his vein than it would have had, perhaps, if left to itself. Some years ago, studying him for my own pleasure and without thinking I should ever speak of him in public, I wrote this page which I will ask leave to transcribe, as being the clearest and most sincere expression of my last literary opinion of him :

'Béranger has gained as much fame as he deserves, and a little more ; his reputation is at its height. Whatever one may say, the kind has something to do with it, and a song is not an *epic poem* ; it is not even an *ode* (I mean an ode like

Pindar's). It has been Béranger's cleverness, his art, his cunning to make people believe in his greatness ; he has written some charming things, and it seems as if he only lacked elbow-room to be great. But if he had had that room, he would have been at a loss to fill it. He has made us believe that he was *cramped* within the song, when he was really *aided* by it.

'And then this same constraint, when it makes itself felt, is a real defect. Now, we become sensible of it every moment in the songs with *refrain*, whenever the poet wishes to rise ; every six or eight lines there is a *catch* in his breath. I will make a comparison which, though not very elegant, is accurate. Imagine somebody in a porter's lodge reading aloud a touching or sublime passage, somewhat as in the scene of Henri Monnier. At the moment when the reader is beginning to get warm and use his chest-notes, he is suddenly interrupted by a rough voice coming from the street : *Cord, if you please !* This *Cord, if you please*, is the obligatory refrain. Be the poet ever so high, though in the course of the verse he has mounted to the first floor or even to the garret, he is obliged to hurry down again, four steps at a time, to pull that tiresome cord of the refrain. In some cases his nimbleness excites our wonder ; in many other cases he breaks his arms and legs.

'That *coup de cord* (pull of the cord) as I call it, is very perceptible in the last verses of *Le Dieu des Bonnes Gens*.

'Not to make a wrong use of terms, Byron, Milton, Pindar remain the only truly great poets, and Béranger is a charming poet'.

That is my conviction, which after a full reading I have just confirmed within myself, and I dare to affirm it because I think the moment has come, at least in literature, when one should say all one believes true.

I am not here waging a war of detail against a poet whom I admire ; but this war, this minute examination, be pleased to remark, none of our modern poets has been hitherto spared, except Béranger. For him alone, carried away by the apparent modesty of the kind, by the felicity of the refrain, by the vogue of his sentiments, we have closed our eyes, we have stood at his side, and, whilst singing him in chorus, we have unreservedly given him credit for every excellence. It has been his art, his skill, his triumph to touch the chords dear to the greater number so successfully, that he has thus carried away his public (the roguish fellow that he is), and that it was not so much a distinct public opposing him as a chorus singing with one accord around him.

Nor did he obtain this success without a few sacrifices to public opinion, sacrifices made at the expense of good taste; but those are not the only ones I wish to point out here, and there have been some more serious ones on his part. A man of sincere patriotism, it is evident to-day that in too eagerly encouraging the triumph of passions and the explosion of popular feelings, he did not sufficiently think of the morrow. More hostile than anybody under the Restoration, unwilling to have the Bourbons at any price, he appeared to be not much more in favour of the Orleans dynasty. He wished for the Republic; there is no doubt about that. And yet, when the Republic unexpectedly dropped upon us, and Chateaubriand, already much bowed down with age, roused himself to say to Béranger: 'Well! now you have your Republic!'—'Yes, I have it, replied the man of wit, but I would rather dream of it than see it'. Those words he really uttered. I might make them the text of quite a moral commentary intended for those who make an idol of popularity, and who stand forth as the great obedient priests of it, though they may be the most honest people in the world, and call themselves Béranger or La Fayette: 'So, we might say to them, you are continually urging what you do not desire after all, or what you desire very little'.

'The people is my Muse', Béranger said. But it seems to me that he too often understood that word *people* in a narrow sense, he understood it in a sense which implies opposition and conflict of classes; he boasted of being one of the people when it would have been enough not to boast of the contrary. And why, I pray you, that birth-pride thus paraded, certainly in a contrary sense, but still paraded? Is it a reason for boastfulness to have been born in one spot of this earth rather than in another? And would it not be more simple and more humble to say to oneself, with the ancient poet: 'One same Chaos has engendered all mortal beings'?

In reading Béranger's early poems again, this constant preoccupation of the poet becomes displeasing. He will say of his friend Manuel, in a compact and rather hard line:

Bras, tête et cœur, tout était *peuple* en lui.

A man of a different party might equally well say of one

of his chiefs : ' All was *royal* in him '. One might say of a Bayard : ' All was *chivalric* in him '. And it would be neither more false nor more just. Let us be men before everything, and know the worth of men. You know well, O Poet, half-disappointed to-day but not yet recovered from your rôle, you know well, and have said so, that there are *more fools than knaves* in the world ; but there are many fools, you know that too ; let us then not make one class, however numerous it may be, the origin and stock of all the virtues.

Could one believe that in his song *Les Rossignols*, with the refrain : ' *Sweet Nightingales, sing for me* ', the poet was capable of saying :

Vous qui redoutez l'esclavage,
Ah ! refusez vos tendres airs
A ces nobles qui, d'âge en âge,
Pour en donner portent des fers.

So, because one is born *noble*, one is to be excluded and deprived of the song of the nightingale ! So again, in the *Adieux à la Campagne*, which has so sincere an accent of melancholy, the nightingale is chosen for a political emblem :

Sur ma prison vienne au moins Philomèle !
Jadis un roi causa tous ses malheurs.

To understand that we must know our mythology ; we must remember that once, in Thrace, a wicked king called *Tereus* played the poor Philomela a sorry trick. From *Tereus* to Louis XVIII or to Charles X it is but a hand's-breadth, as we know. That is a petty side of Béranger's Songs, which the future even, though the most democratic in the world, will not extol.

Other sides will grow and survive : those namely which are touched with the pure and fresh breath of poetry. *Les Bohémiens* is one of those philosophic ballads or fantasies, with a vivacious, brisk, joyful, exhilarating rhythm ; it is the best perhaps, the finest and most perfect of what I call his disinterested songs, which owe nothing to circumstances. Other very elevated songs of the 1833 Collection, such as *Les Contrebandiers*, *Le Vieux Vagabond*, *Jacques*, *Jeanne la Rousse*, have a very strong colouring of that socialism which succeeded, in outside opinion, to the

liberalism of the Restoration : Béranger is very susceptible and very attentive to those currents of the atmosphere. Severe and consequent minds have justly remarked that the sentiment which inspired those little pieces might carry one a long way, and may have regretted that the illustrious poet did not remain in the Constituent Assembly to defend, to explain, to comment on and to apply, if ever there was occasion, the moral of those songs, which are poetically very fine. In these, the intelligent man in Béranger, the cautious man, the man we may call (with all respect) a *great coquette*, got the better, we are not afraid of saying so, of the citizen and even the poet. An entirely generous poet, an André Chénier, would not have hesitated. But Béranger, aged, and seeing besides some newly converted poets at work, must have thought that he was superfluous in the arena ; he had the megrims and felt disgusted.

Of the few songs composed and published by him since February, 1848, there is nothing to be said, except that they offer only a small number of happy features, and that they are in general laborious, rugged and harsh.

Just now I used the word *coquette*, and I abide by it. That is an essential weakness in the excellent man we are speaking of, a feature by which the real and veritable Béranger differs from the conventional and legendary Béranger, the Béranger of the man in the street and the vignettes. Those who have had the best opportunities of judging him think that his rare good sense is sometimes spoiled by a spirit of contradiction and a grain of caprice, and also by a habit of too continual and too subtle calculation. He understood his part very early, and he devoted himself to it, to such a degree that he never allowed himself to do anything that was not in harmony with it. Would you like a little quite literary example of it ? Béranger is not a member of the French Academy ; he has thought to himself that he should not belong to it. It is a singularity on which he prides himself, and of which he would almost boast if all the world did not know that he might, if he pleased, be one of the first of the Forty. But he does not wish 'any other title but that of *Song-writer* to be ever joined to his name'. He was *nothing, not even an Academician*, that is an epitaph he has applied to himself in advance. Oh ! if I had the honour, for my

own part, of being, not a member, but the whole majority in the Academy just for a moment, what a trick I would play the illustrious and sly songster ! Béranger should be elected without having to make any calls. He would decline ; very well ! he would still be elected. He would protest in the newspapers in a very witty, very shrewd letter ; we should take no notice of it. His chair would still be plainly marked with his name. The rogue would be caught. He is not sorry in his heart to put the Academy a little in the wrong by his absence ; the Academy would leave him the satisfaction.

Béranger's relations during the last ten years with Chateaubriand, with La Mennais, and even with Lamartine, have been well known ; they are interesting when one thinks of what all those men started from. When in imagination I picture them all assembled in the arbour around the author of so many mocking verses, I call it the *Carnival of Venice* of our high literature. We must do Béranger the justice that he was not the first to seek the acquaintance of those men who were at first reputed more serious than he, who are not so, and to none of whom he yields in respect of intellect. They came to him ; yes, all of them, some a little sooner, others a little later, have come to recognize in him the spirit of the time, to render him fealty and homage, to give him brilliant pledges.

Béranger was for them a temptation, and all of them, one after another, succumbed to it.

Chateaubriand was the most eager of the three. His sympathy, which had been so long in abeyance and so well disguised from itself, knew how to choose its time to become manifest. The brilliant champion of the throne and the altar saw the world turning its attention in other directions, and more than half of the younger generation slipping away from him ; his calculation then was quick and direct. He who was so bitter to all and so much on his guard with the men of his own opinions, only thought to himself that he ought to make advances to Béranger and Carrel because both of them brought him for his glory a balance of popularity : each of them represented a great party ; by adding them to what he already had, he increased and completed his army of admirers.

M. de La Mennais, in spite of passions which his friends regret, was much more artless, more simple and impulsive.

Whatever one may say of him, one cannot say that he is a calculating man. At the time of his democratic transformation, after the *Paroles d'un Croyant*, he went to Béranger as an auxiliary, as a child full of fervour, to see and talk with him, and Béranger won him by his charm. I can still see the latter rubbing his hands mischievously and saying: 'Well! your La Mennais, he is an Arian; I have made him confess that he did not believe in . . . I have played my part of a devil'. He assuredly did so on that day.

Lamartine, whom Béranger long looked upon as an aristocrat and a *gentleman*, and whom he did not praise as a poet until after the appearance of *Jocelyn* (when he was on the decline), did not enter this circle of friendship until much later, and never so intimately.

Béranger is the equal of all these eminent men by the richness of his conversation, by the fertility of his ideas, and surpasses them by the pleasingness and the adroitness of the details. He had assumed a strange rôle among them all; he had insensibly become their confidential adviser. He said: somewhere 'To consult a person is a means of speaking of oneself that one rarely neglects'. One might say the same thing of the rôle of an adviser when he knows how to play it; under pretence of taking an interest in others he imperceptibly pushes himself forward, he cites himself as an example. Béranger cannot resist it; he gives advice even without being asked for it. I have seen Carrel return in great indignation from Passy, because Béranger had given him much advice that he had not asked for.

I find in a familiar letter an account of a visit to Béranger which will express what I have to say of him more graphically than I could do in general terms, and which contains nothing besides but what is honourable and pleasing:

'May, 1846.—I have seen Béranger again for the first time after some years, wrote the visitor: it was La Mennais who earnestly persuaded me to visit him. I found Béranger in his Avenue *Sainte-Marie*, near the Étoile gate, after dinner, alone, walking in a little square of a garden as big as one's hand, without his spectacles, pimply, sixty-six years of age, but young in mind, animated, amiable and charming as ever. He received me very kindly, and appeared to refrain purposely (as I thought) from saying any of those wicked things he is

so fond of, and which are not always pleasant to hear. He could not help, however, showing himself a man of the *centre*, as has always been his habit, and as he has some right to do. He spoke to me very soon of Chateaubriand, of La Mennais, bandying these names at pleasure; he gave me to understand that he was La Mennais' adviser. Béranger likes to play the counsellor; he assumes the part even when it is not offered to him. Speaking of the literature of the day, of which he reviewed all the names (George Sand, Hugo, Dumas), he said that "we had all had the misfortune of starting too early, and that had exposed us to recantations". He would apparently like everybody to wait until he is thirty-eight or forty before making his *début*. I replied that a man started as soon as he was able and saw his way, and that one could not choose one's time. But to sum up, in this two hours' conversation he was charming, simple, good-natured, piquant and fertile in ideas, in pretty and shrewd observations.

'Two days later, on Sunday (May 24), I met him by chance about four o'clock, near Saint-Sulpice. He had that morning seen Lamartine, whom he knew to be ill, and advised him, so he told me, to take cinchona: "But Lamartine thinks he is a physician, he added; he thinks he knows everything because he is a poet, and he will not hear of cinchona". I smiled to myself at the thought that Béranger too thought himself a physician, and did not see that his remark applied to himself; he had just advised Lamartine to take cinchona, just as the evening before he had advised La Mennais about some legacy he did not want him to accept. However, there was, I thought, something significant and honourable in this final *rapprochement* of men so eminent and different, who had started from such opposite points of the horizon. Instead of abusing each other, as they used to do in the time of Voltaire and Rousseau, they call upon and consult each other, and show little attentions to one another. That shows too how much the early convictions have worn off. With Béranger still faithful to his part, it is the spirit of the century that is triumphing, and which in the end will easily manage the recalcitrants. Béranger knows very well that he represents in his person that astute spirit, and he tends his flock. La Mennais! Chateaubriand! Lamartine! On that Sunday Béranger had made what I call his pastoral round.

'Béranger would be perfect if he had not one little pretension: which? That of posing as the only real sage of his time'.

To sum up. As a poet, Béranger is one of the greatest, not the greatest of our age. The ranks are not in my opinion as distinct as his exclusive admirers believe. Into

that so highly lauded perfection there enters also a good deal of blend. Compared with the poets of earlier times, he belongs to the second and still so rare group of the Burns', the Horaces, the La Fontaines. But these latter, who were never party poets, remain for that reason more elevated and belong to a more universally human order. Read Horace in his Epistles, La Fontaine in his Fables: they flattered no passion, they petted no human folly. If Béranger cudgelled more than one of them, he did so too much in order to fondle others. In the end Béranger came, I think, to the same conclusion as Voltaire, as Rabelais, as Cervantes, that there are more fools than wise men in the world, he says more fools than knaves. But is this observation sufficiently indicated in his works, and does it not often appear, when we read him, as if all the wisdom, all the reason, were on one side, the wrong and the unreason on the other? That fixed idea regarding the wisdom and the infallible virtue of the *masses* lessens him greatly, in my opinion. But, in an epoch of effort, of conflict and calculation, he succeeded in finding his vein, he made his poetry to gush forth, a masterly, living, feeling, elevated, astute, original poetry, and he excelled in it enough to be sure of surviving, even when some of the passions that he served, and which are not immortal, have expired.

MADAME GEOFFRIN

Monday, July 22, 1850.

AFTER all that I have said of the women of the eighteenth century, there would be too great a gap if I did not speak of Mme. Geoffrin, one of the most celebrated and one whose influence was greatest. Mme. Geoffrin wrote nothing that has been published except four or five letters; many telling and piquant sayings of hers are quoted; but that would not be enough to make her survive: what characterizes her particularly and makes her deserving of remembrance by posterity, is that she had the most complete, the best organized, and if I may say so, the best *administered* salon of her time, the best established salon which had existed in France since the foundation of salons—that is to say, since the Hôtel Rambouillet. Mme. Geoffrin's salon was one of the institutions of the eighteenth century.

There are perhaps people who imagine that in order to form a salon it is enough to be rich, to have a good cook, a comfortable house situated in a good quarter, a great desire to see company, and affability to receive it: by those means one may succeed only in gathering a mixed company, in filling one's drawing-room, not in creating a salon; and if one is very rich and very active, very much driven by that kind of ambition which desires to shine, and is at the same time expert in drawing up the list of invitations, and determined at any cost to attract to one's house the kings or queens of the season, one may attain the reputation gained every winter by a few Americans in Paris: they have their brilliant *roués*, where people drop in in a hurry, and the winter after they are forgotten. How far from this kind of invasion to the art of a real establishment! This art was never better known or

practised than it was in the eighteenth century, in the bosom of that regular and peaceful society, and none carried it further, conceived it on a greater scale, and applied it with more perfection and finish in details than Mme. Geoffrin. No Roman cardinal could have put more diplomacy into it, a more refined and pleasing ability, than she expended during thirty years. It is above all in studying her closely that we are convinced that a great social influence always has its cause, and that, under these celebrated fortunes which at this distance are summed up in a mere often repeated name, there was much labour, study and talent; in the present case of Mme. Geoffrin, we should add much good sense.

When we first get sight of Mme. Geoffrin she is already advanced in years, and her youth is hidden from us in a distance that we will not try to penetrate. Of middle-class, and very middle-class, birth, born at Paris in the last year of the seventeenth century, Marie-Thérèse Rodet had been married on July 19, 1713, to Pierre-François Geoffrin, a substantial burgher, one of the lieutenant-colonels of the National Guard of the day, and one of the founders of the Manufactory of mirrors. A letter of Montesquieu, dated March, 1748, mentions Mme. Geoffrin at that time as gathering very good company at her house, and the centre already of that circle which for twenty-five years was to continue and grow. What was the origin of this so distinguished and so clever lady, who seemed destined neither by birth nor by her position in society to play such a part? What had been the nature of her early education? The Empress of Russia, Catherine, one day asked this question of Mme. Geoffrin, who replied to her in a letter, which might be added to all that Montaigne has written on education:

'I lost my father and mother in infancy, she said. I was brought up by an old grandmother who was very intelligent and had a good head. She had had very little education, but her mind was so clear, so *adroit*, so active, that it never failed her; it always took the place of learning. She spoke so pleasantly of things she did not know, that nobody desired her to know more; and when her ignorance was too obvious, she would get out of it by a witticism which disconcerted the pedants who tried to humiliate her. She was so contented with her lot, that she regarded learning as a very useless thing

for a woman. She would say : " I have done so well without it, that I have never felt the need of it. If my granddaughter is a fool, learning would make her conceited and insupportable ; if she has wit and sensibility, she will do as I did, she will make up for what she does not know *by address and feeling* ; and when she is more reasonable, she will learn that for which she has the most aptitude, and she will learn it very quickly ". So she taught me nothing in my childhood, except to read ; but she made me read much ; she taught me to think by making me argue ; she taught me to know my fellow-creatures by making me say what I thought of them, and by telling me her opinion of them. She obliged me to give her an account of all my doings and all my feelings, and she corrected them with so much sweetness and grace, that I never concealed my thoughts and feelings from her : my heart was as visible to her as my body. My education was continuous . . . '

I have said that Mme. Geoffrin was born at Paris : she never left that city except for her famous journey to Warsaw in 1766, at the age of sixty-seven. Otherwise she had never left the outskirts ; and, even when she paid a visit to some friend in the country, she habitually returned in the evening and never slept out. She held this opinion ' that there is no better air than that of Paris ', and, wherever she might be, she would have preferred her gutter of the Rue Saint-Honoré, as Mme. de Staël regretted that of the Rue du Bac. Mme. Geoffrin adds another name to that list of Parisian geniuses who have been gifted in so high a degree with the virtue of affability and sociability, and who easily become civilizers.

Her husband seems to have counted for little in her life, except as the man who provided the fortune which formed the starting-point and the first instrument of the consideration she acquired. M. Geoffrin is described as an old man, silently present at the dinners given in his house to men of letters and savants. Somebody, it is said, tried to get him to read some book on history or travels, and, as they kept giving him the first volume without his becoming aware of it, he was satisfied with thinking ' that the work was interesting, but that the author repeated himself a little '. It is added that, reading a volume of the *Encyclopædia* or a work by Bayle, which was printed in double columns, he would continue reading from the line of the first column to the correspond-

ing line of the second, which made him say 'that the work appeared to him good, but a little abstruse'. Those are stories which were bound to be told of the effaced husband of a celebrated woman. One day a stranger asked Mme. Geoffrin what had become of that old gentleman who was regularly present at the dinners and who was no longer there?—'That was my husband, he is dead'.

Mme. Geoffrin had a daughter, who became the Marquise de La Ferté-Imbault, an excellent woman, it was said, but who had not her mother's calmness of sense and perfect balance, and of whom the latter once said: 'When I look at her, I feel like a hen that has hatched a duck's egg'.

So Mme. Geoffrin took after her grandmother, and seems besides to have been unique of her kind. Her talent, like all talents, was quite personal. Mme. Suard describes her as imposing respect with tractability, 'by her tall figure, her silvery hair covered with a coif fastened under the chin, by her dignified and becoming style of dress, and her air of reason mingled with kindness'. Diderot, after playing a game of piquet with her at the Baron d'Holbach's, in the Grandval, whither she had gone to dine (October, 1760), wrote to a lady friend: 'Mme. Geoffrin looked very well. I always remark the dignified and simple taste with which that woman dresses: on this day she wore a simple stuff of a sombre colour, wide sleeves, the smoothest and most delicate linen, and then in everything the most studied neatness'. Mme. Geoffrin was then sixty-one years of age. This style of dress, appropriate to an elderly woman, so exquisite in its modesty and simplicity, was peculiar to her, and recalls the quite similar art of Mme. de Maintenon. But Mme. Geoffrin did not think it necessary to husband or assist the remnants of a beauty which still shone in flashes in the half-light; she frankly dressed up to her age, and she suppressed the late summer. Whilst most women are anxious to make an orderly retreat and to prolong their age of yesterday, she took time by the forelock and resigned herself without any hesitation to her age of the morrow. 'All women, somebody said of her, dress as for yesterday, Mme. Geoffrin alone is always dressed as for the morrow'.

Mme. Geoffrin is supposed to have taken her lessons in

high-life of Mme. de Tencin, and to have formed herself in that school. These words of Mme. de Tencin are quoted; seeing her towards the end very assiduous in visiting her, she said to her guests: 'Do you know what Mme. Geoffrin comes here for? she comes to see what she can pick up of my inventory'. This inventory was worth the trouble, since it was composed in the first place of Fontenelle, Montesquieu, and Mairan. Mme. de Tencin is much less remarkable as an author of sentimental and romantic stories, in which perhaps her nephews helped her, than by her spirit of intrigue, her skilful strategy, and by the boldness and weight of her judgments. A woman who is little deserving of esteem, some of whose actions are not far removed from the criminal, she captivated people who came near her by her air of mildness and almost kindness. When her interests were not at stake, she could give you safe and practical advice, which might be useful to you in life. She knew the niceties of the game in all things. More than one great statesman, even in our days, would have profited if he had kept this maxim in view, which she used to repeat: 'Men of intellect make many mistakes in conduct, because they never think the world as stupid as it is'. The nine letters of her which are published and which are addressed to the Duc de Richelieu during the campaign of 1743, reveal her in all the manoeuvres of her ambition, endeavouring to grasp the power for herself and her brother the Cardinal, in that short moment when the King, emancipated by the death of the Cardinal de Fleury, has not yet any avowed mistress. Louis XV was never more thoroughly judged and with a more clear-sighted and better-motivated contempt, than in these nine letters of Mme. de Tencin. Already in 1743 this intriguing woman has flashing glances which reach to the horizon: 'Unless God visibly interferes, she writes, it is physically impossible for the State not to come to ruin'. It was this clever mistress whom Mme. Geoffrin consulted and from whom she received good counsels, notably that advice never to refuse any advances, any offer of friendship; for, if nine out of ten are unprofitable, the tenth may make up for all the rest; and then, as that woman of resource said, 'everything is serviceable in a household, when one has it in oneself to use the tools'.

Mme. Geoffrin therefore partly inherited Mme. de Tencin's salon, and her way of conducting it ; but whilst limiting her ability to the private sphere, she singularly extended it and in a quite honourable direction. Mme. de Tencin stirred heaven and earth to have her brother made Prime Minister : Mme. Geoffrin left politics alone, never meddled with matters of religion, and, by her infinite art, by her spirit of continuity and conduct, she became herself a sort of skilful administrator, and almost a great *minister of society*, one of those ministers who are the more influential for being less official and less permanent.

She at once understood that machine which is called a salon in all its range, and managed to organize it into a complete thing, with soft and silent but ingenious wheel-works, which she kept going with continual care. She surrounded with her solicitude not only men of letters proper, but she devoted attention to artists, sculptors and painters, and made them acquainted with one another and with men of the world ; in a word, she conceived the Encyclopedia of the century in action and conversation around her. Every week she gave two regular dinners, on Mondays for artists : there one saw the Vanloos, Vernet, Boucher, La Tour, Vien, Lagrenée, Soufflot, Lemoine, a few amateurs of distinction and patrons of the arts, a few men of letters like Marmontel, to sustain the conversation and form a bond between the two professions. On Wednesday was the dinner for men of letters ; one saw d'Alembert, Mairan, Marivaux, Marmontel, the Chevalier de Chastellux, Morellet, Saint-Lambert, Helvétius, Raynal, Thomas, Grimm, d'Holbach, Burigny of the Academy of Inscriptions. Only one woman was admitted with the mistress of the house : that was Mlle. de Lespinasse. Mme. Geoffrin had remarked that several women at a dinner distract the attention of the guests, and scatter and break up the conversation ; she loved unity and to remain a centre. In the afternoons Mme. Geoffrin's house continued to be open, and the evening ended with a very simple and choice little supper, composed of five or six intimate friends at the most, and this time included several women, the flower of the great world. No stranger of distinction resided in or passed through Paris, but he aspired to be admitted to Mme. Geoffrin's house.

Princes came as simple commoners ; ambassadors came regularly as soon as they had a footing there. Europe was represented there in the persons of Caraccioli, Creutz, Galiani, Gatti, Hume and Gibbon.

We may see already that, of all the salons of the eighteenth century, Mme. Geoffrin's is the most complete. It is more so than that of Mme. Du Deffand, who, after the defection of d'Alembert and the others following in the wake of Mlle. de Lespinasse, had lost almost all her men of letters. Mlle. de Lespinasse's salon, leaving aside five or six stock friends, was itself formed of men not very closely intimate with one another, chosen here and there, whom that clever lady matched with infinite art. Mme. Geoffrin's salon, on the other hand, represents for us the chief centre and rendezvous of the eighteenth century. With its seemingly activity and its animated orderliness it forms a counter-weight to the little dinners and licentious suppers of Mlle. Quinault, of Mlle. Guimard, of the financiers, of the Pelletiers and the La Popelinières. Towards the end there appear, in emulation and a little in rivalry with this salon, those of the Baron d'Holbach, of Mme. Helvétius, in part composed of the flower of Mme. Geoffrin's guests, and partly of a few heads whom Mme. Geoffrin had found too lively to admit to her dinners. The century was at last growing tired of being restrained by her and held in leading strings ; it wanted to speak loudly and to its heart's content on all themes.

The spirit that Mme. Geoffrin brought to the management and economy of this little empire which she had so broadly conceived, was a spirit of naturalness, of justness and shrewdness, which stooped to the smallest details, an adroit, active and pleasant spirit. She had planed over the carvings in her apartment : it was the same in the moral sense, and *Nothing in relief* appeared to be her motto. 'My mind, she said, is like my legs ; I like to walk on level ground, but I will not climb mountains in order to have the pleasure of saying, when I have reached the top : *I have climbed this mountain*'. She liked simplicity, and, if need were, she would have affected it a little. Her activity was of that kind which is remarkable chiefly on account of its good order, one of those discreet activities which work at all points almost in silence and imperceptibly. Mistress in her house, she had an eye

to everything ; she presides, she scolds however, but with a scolding which is peculiar to her ; she imposes silence at the proper time, she does the police duty of her salon. With a single word : *Voilà qui est bien* (that is all right), she arrests a conversation at the right point when it begins to stray upon a risky subject and heads are getting warm : they are afraid of her, and go and *keep their Sabbath* elsewhere. Her principle is to talk herself only when necessary, to put in her word only at certain moments, and not to hold the dice too long. It is then that she brings in her wise maxims, piquant tales, morals in action and anecdote, usually seasoned with some very familiar expression or image. All this comes well only from her mouth, she knows that : so she says ' that she does not wish others to preach her sermons, tell her tales, or touch her tongs '.

Having assumed the attitude of an elderly woman before her time and of the *maman* of the men she receives, she has a means of governing them, a little artifice which in the end becomes a habit and a mania ; that was scolding ; but scolding was becoming to her. Not everybody enjoys the privilege of being scolded ; it is the greatest mark of her favour and her guidance. The man whom she likes most is also the best scolded. Horace Walpole, before he crossed over, with unfurled standards, into the camp of Mme. Du Deffand, wrote from Paris to his friend Gray :

' (January 25, 1766) Madame Geoffrin, of whom you have heard much, is an extraordinary woman, with more common-sense than I almost ever met with. Great quickness in discovering characters, penetration in going to the bottom of them, and a pencil that never fails in a likeness—seldom a favourable one. She exacts and preserves, spite of her birth and their nonsensical prejudices about nobility, great court and attention. This she acquires by a thousand little arts and offices of friendship : and by a freedom and severity, which seem to be her sole end of drawing a concourse to her ; for she insists on scolding those she inveigles to her. She has little taste and less knowledge, but protects artizans and authors, and courts a few people to have the credit of serving her dependants. She was bred under the famous Mme. Tencin, who advised her never to refuse any man ; for, said her mistress, though nine in ten should not care a farthing for you, the tenth may live to be an useful friend. She did not adopt or reject the whole plan, but fully retained the

purport of the maxim. In short, she is an epitome of empire, subsisting by rewards and punishments'.

The office of major-domo of her salon was generally intrusted to Burigny, one of her oldest friends, and one of the best scolded of all. When any infraction of the rules occurred and when some imprudent word made itself loud, she was wont to blame him for not having kept order.

The men laughed and jested about it with her and submitted to this discipline, which was certainly rather strict and exacting, but was tempered with so much goodness and benevolence. This right of correction she assumed to herself in her own manner, by occasionally placing some good little life annuity on your head, not forgetting the annual present of the velvet breeches.

Not without reason did Fontenelle make Mme. Geoffrin his testamentary executrix. If we observe her well Mme. Geoffrin appears to have been, by the nature of her mind, by the method of her conduct, by her kind of influence, the Fontenelle of women, a Fontenelle more active in beneficence (we will presently return to this characteristic), but a real Fontenelle by her prudence, by her manner of conceiving and composing her happiness, by her manner of speaking, which at will became familiar, epigrammatic and ironic without bitterness. She is a Fontenelle who, for the very reason that she is a woman, has more vivacity and a more tender-hearted, more affectionate impulse. But like him she loves repose above everything and walking upon level ground. All that is ardent around her makes her uneasy, and she thinks that reason itself is wrong when it is passionate. One day she compared her mind with 'a *folded scroll* which unrolls and displays itself by degrees'. She was in no haste to unroll it all at once. 'Perhaps at my death, she said, the scroll will not be quite unrolled'. This prudent slowness is a distinctive character of her mind, and of her influence. She feared too sudden movements and too rapid changes: 'We should not pull down the old house, she said, until we have built a new one'. She tempered the already ardent epoch to the best of her power, and tried to discipline it. It was a bad mark, with her, for one who frequented her dinner parties, to be put into the Bastille; Marmontel became aware of falling very much in her favour after the

affair of his *Bélisaire*. In a word, she continues to represent the already philosophic, but still moderating, spirit of the first part of the century, as long as it did not cease to recognize certain limits. I can paint Mme. Geoffrin's constant solicitude very well by an image : she had had a wig (a marble wig if you please) added to Diderot's bust by Falconet.

Her charity was great as it was ingenious, and in her it was a real gift of nature ; she had the *giving temper*, as she said. *Donner et pardonner*, to give and to forgive was her motto. Conferring benefits was perpetual with her. She could not help making presents to everybody, to the poorest man of letters as to the Empress of Germany, and she made them with that art and perfect delicacy which does not permit of a refusal without a sort of rudeness. Her sensibility had become perfected by the practice of doing good and by an exquisite social tact. Her charity, like all her other qualities, had something singular and original, which one saw in her alone. A thousand charming, unexpected traits have been told about her, of which Sterne would have made the most of ; I will recall only one. Somebody remarked to her one day that everything in her house was perfection, everything, except the *cream*, which was not good. 'What am I to do, she said, I cannot change my milkwoman'. 'Ah ! what has the milk-woman done that you cannot change her ?' 'I have given her two cows'. 'A fine reason !' they exclaimed on all sides. And indeed, one day when the milk-woman was crying in despair at the loss of her cow, Mme. Geoffrin gave her two, an extra one to comfort her for having cried so much, and since that day she could not understand how she could ever change her dairy. Here was the rarity and the delicacy. Many people would have been capable of giving a cow or even two ; but to keep on the ungrateful or careless milk-woman, in spite of her bad cream, that they would not have done. Mme. Geoffrin did it for her own pleasure, in order not to spoil the memory of a charming action. She wanted to do good in her own manner, that was her distinctive quality. Just as she scolded, not in order to correct, but for her own pleasure, so she gave, not to make people happy or grateful, but above everything to make herself happy. Her benefits were marked with a stamp of bluntness and *humour* ; she hated thanks :

'Thanks, she said, caused her an agreeable and almost serious anger'. On that subject she had quite a theory carried to the point of paradox, and she went so far as to deliver quite a formal eulogy of ingratitude. What is most clear is that even in giving she wished to *pay herself with her own hands*, and that she could relish *quite alone* the satisfaction of obliging. Must I say it? I think I see in her, in spite of her excellent nature, that stamp of egotism and coldness which is inherent in the eighteenth century. The pupil of Mme. de Tencin, the friend of Fontenelle, reappears even in the moment when she yields to her heart's inclination; she yields to it, but still without abandon, with premeditation. Of Montesquieu we know too that he once acted very nobly, after which he brusquely and almost hard-heartedly avoided the thanks and tears of the person he had obliged. Contempt of his fellow-men is too evident here even in the benefactor. Is it right to despise them just at the moment when one uplifts them, touches their hearts and makes them better? In St. Paul's admirable chapter on Charity we read, among other characteristics, of that divine virtue: '*Charitas non quærit quæ sua sunt . . . non cogitat malum . . .* Charity seeketh not her own . . . thinketh no evil'. Here, on the other hand, this worldly and social charity seeks its pleasure, its particular relish and individual satisfaction, and there is mingled with it besides a little malice and irony. I know all that may be said in favour of this charming and estimable virtue, even when it thinks of itself. When she was taken to task on that point Mme. Geoffrin had a thousand good answers, and shrewd like herself: 'Those, she said, who rarely oblige, have no need of customary maxims; but those who often oblige must oblige in the most agreeable manner for themselves, *because one should do conveniently what one wishes to do every day*'. There is something of Franklin in that maxim, of Franklin when he corrects and materializes a little the too spiritual sense of Charity according to St. Paul. Let us then respect and honour Mme. Geoffrin's natural and reasoned liberality; but let us acknowledge that in all this kindness and benevolence there is lacking a certain divine flame, just as in the whole of that spirit and social art of the eighteenth century there is lacking a flower of imagination and poetry, a divine

background of light. We never see in the distance the blue of the skies nor the light of the stars.

We have already been able to form an idea of the form and quality of Mme. Geoffrin's mind. The dominating quality in her was balance and good sense. Horace Walpole whom I like to quote, a good judge and above suspicion, had seen much of Mme. Geoffrin before he came under Mme. Du Deffand's sway; he was extremely appreciative of her, always speaking of her as one of the best heads, one of the best *understandings* he had met with, and as the person who possesses the best knowledge of the world. Writing to Lady Hervey after an attack of gout he had just suffered, he said:

'(Paris, October 13, 1765). Madame Geoffrin came and sat two hours last night by my bedside: I could have sworn it had been my Lady Hervey, she was so good to me. It was with so much ease, information, instruction and correction! The manner of the latter charms me. I never saw anybody in my days that catches one's faults and vanities and impositions so quick, that explains them to one so clearly, and convinces one so easily. I never liked to be set right before; you cannot imagine how I taste it! I make her both my confessor and director, and begin to think I shall be a reasonable creature at last, which I had never intended to be. The next time I see her I believe I shall say, "Oh! *Common Sense*, sit down. I have been thinking so and so; is not it absurd?"—for t'other sense and wisdom, I never liked them; I shall now hate them for her sake. If it was worth her while, I assure your ladyship she might govern me like a child'.

On every occasion he speaks of her as of reason itself.

We begin to form an idea of the kind of singular and scolding charm that the good sense of Mme. Geoffrin exercised around her. She loved to lecture her friends, and generally her lectures are enjoyed. It is true that if you did not submit, if you tried to escape from her desire to advise and correct, she was not pleased and a drier little tone informed you that her vanity was hurt, that her pretensions as mentor and director had suffered a check.

We have recently seen in print the following little note from her to David Hume, as a specimen of her manner of *stuffing* people when she was pleased with them; I only suppress the orthographical mistakes, for Mme. Geoffrin was not good at spelling, and did not conceal the fact.

'To play the fine rigorist, by not replying to a *billet-doux*

which I wrote you through Gatti, was all you needed, my big scamp, to become a perfect coxcomb. And you are trying to put on an air of modesty, in order to have every possible air'.

Mme. de Tencin called the wits of her company her fools (*bêtes*); Mme. Geoffrin continued to treat them a little on the same footing and despotically. With her scolding was a profession, an attitude, the graciousness of an elderly woman.

She formed very sound judgments of her friends and the frequenters of her salon, and some terrible things are remembered which escaped her, and not in jest. It was she who said of the Abbé Trublet, whom somebody in her presence had called a man of wit: 'He a man of wit! he is a *fool rubbed with wit*'. She said of the Duc de Nivernais: 'He is a *failure* in everything, as a soldier, an ambassador, and author, etc.'. Rulhière used to read in the salons his manuscript *Anecdotes on Russia*; she would have liked him to burn them, and offered him a money compensation. Rulhière was indignant, and put forward all the great sentiments of honour, disinterestedness, love of truth; she replied simply: 'Do you want more?' We see that Mme. Geoffrin was only pleasant when she wished to be, and that that benign humour and charity covered a bitter experience.

I have already mentioned Franklin in connexion with her. She had some of those maxims which seem to proceed from the same calculating and ingenious, quite practical good sense. On her counters she had had engraved this maxim: 'Economy is the source of independence and liberty'. And this other: 'One should not allow grass to grow on the path of friendship'.

Her mind was one of those shrewd minds of which Pascal spoke, which are accustomed to judge at the first hit and *all at one sight*, and do not correct themselves if they have made a wrong hit. Those are the minds which are a little afraid of fatigue and ennui, and whose sound and sometimes keen judgment is not continuous. Mme. Geoffrin, gifted in the highest degree with that sort of mind, differed entirely in this respect from Mme. Du Châtelet, for example, who loved to follow up and exhaust an argument. Those quick and delicate minds are especially apt for acquiring a knowledge of the world and

humanity ; they like to cast their looks around rather than arrest them. Mme. Geoffrin needed a great variety in persons and things, in order to avoid weariness. Assiduities stifled her ; the too long duration even of a pleasure made it intolerable to her ; ' of the most agreeable society she wished only as much as she was able to take at her hours and in comfort '. A visit which threatened to be prolonged and drawn out indefinitely made her turn pale and wish she were dead. One day when she saw the good Abbé de Saint-Pierre settling himself down for a whole winter's evening, she had a moment of terror, and inspired by the desperate situation, she exerted herself to such good purpose that she drew the worthy Abbé, and made him amusing. He quite astonished himself, and when on leaving she complimented him on his good conversation, he replied : ' Madame, I am only an instrument that you have been playing upon '. Mme. Geoffrin was a clever *virtuoso*.

In all this I am only extracting from and summing up the Memoirs of the time. It is a greater pleasure than one supposes to read again these authors of the eighteenth century who are reputed second-rate, and who are simply excellent in moderate prose. Nothing is more pleasing, delicate and distinguished than the pages which MarmonTEL has devoted in his Memoirs to Mme. Geoffrin and the painting of that society. Even Morellet, when he speaks of her, is not only an excellent painter but a perfect analyst ; the hand which writes is a little heavy, but the pen is clear and delicate. Even Thomas, who is supposed to be turgid, is most agreeable and most felicitous in expression when speaking of Mme. Geoffrin. It has been repeatedly observed that Thomas is inflated ; but we ourselves have become, in our writing habit, so inflated, so metaphorical, that Thomas, when read again, appears to me simple.

The great event of Mme. Geoffrin's life was the journey she made to Poland (1766), to visit King Stanislas Poniatowski. She had known him as quite a young man in Paris, and like so many others he had profited by her good deeds. Hardly had he ascended the throne of Poland when he wrote to her : *Maman, your son is king ;* and he entreated her to pay him a visit. She did not resist the invitation, in spite of her advanced age ; she passed through Vienna, and was

there the marked object of the attention of the sovereigns. It was believed that this journey concealed a little diplomatic mission. We have letters of Mme. Geoffrin written from Warsaw, they are charming ; they circulated in Paris, and not to know them was to be out of the fashion. Voltaire chose this moment to write to her as to a power ; he entreated her to interest the King of Poland in the Sirven family. Mme. Geoffrin had a good head, and this visit did not turn it. Marmontel, writing to her, appeared to believe that those attentions paid by monarchs to a mere commoner would cause a revolution in her ideas ; Mme. Geoffrin brings him back to the right point of view :

‘ No, my neighbour, she replies (*neighbour*, because Marmontel lived in her house), no, not a word of all that ; nothing of what you think will happen. All things will remain in the state in which I found them, and you will find my heart again as you know it, very sensible to friendship ’.

· Writing to d’Alembert, likewise from Warsaw, she said, congratulating herself on her lot, and without intoxication :

‘ When this voyage is over, I feel that I shall have seen enough of men and things to be convinced that they are everywhere pretty much the same. I have my store of reflections and comparisons well furnished for the remainder of my life ’.

And she adds with a sentiment as touching as it is lofty, on her royal ward :

‘ It is a terrible situation to be King of Poland. I dare not tell him how unfortunate I think him ; alas ! he feels it only too often. All that I have seen since I left my penates will make me thank God that I was born a *Frenchwoman* and a *commoner* ’.

On her return from this visit, during which she had been overwhelmed with honours and considerations, she was more adroitly modest than ever. We may believe that this modesty in her was only a more pleasing and tactful manner of bearing her vanity and glory. But she excelled in this discreet, well-balanced manner. Like Mme. de Maintenon she belonged to that race of *modest boasters*. When she was complimented and questioned on her journey, whether she replied or not, she put no affectation either into her words or her silence. None knew better than she, better than this Parisian bourgeoisie, the art of

treating the great, of getting from them what she wanted without either self-effacement or presumption, and of assuming on every occasion and with everybody an easy air within the bounds of the proprieties.

Like all the powers she had the honour of being attacked. Palissot tried twice to traduce her on the stage as a patron of the Encyclopedists. But of all these attacks the most keenly felt by Mme. Geoffrin must have been the publication of Montesquieu's familiar letters, which the Abbé de Guasco printed in 1767, in order to be disagreeable to her. A few words of Montesquieu against Mme. Geoffrin indicate clearly enough, what one might otherwise guess, that wherever there are men to be governed there enters always a little intrigue and stratagem, even when it is a woman who undertakes it. Mme. Geoffrin, however, had enough influence to stop the edition, and the passages where she was mentioned were replaced by cancels.

Mme. Geoffrin's last illness presented some strange circumstances. Whilst supporting the *Encyclopedia* with her liberalities, she had always preserved a foundation or a corner of religion. La Harpe relates that she had at her disposal a Capuchin confessor, a very accommodating confessor, for the convenience of her friends who might have need of him; for if she did not like her friends to be put into the Bastille, neither did she like them to die without confession. For her own part, though she associated with philosophers, she used to go to mass, as another might go to meet a lover, and she had her balcony at the church of the Capuchins, as others would have had their little villa. Age increased this serious or decorous disposition. As the consequence of a Jubilee which she attended too punctiliously in the summer of 1776 she had a stroke of paralysis, and her daughter, taking advantage of her condition, closed her door to the philosophers, whose influence upon her mother she feared. D'Alembert, Marmontel, Morellet, were bluntly denied; one can imagine the sensation. Turgot wrote to Condorcet: 'I pity poor Mme. Geoffrin for suffering this slavery, and for her having her last moments poisoned by her wretched daughter'. Mme. Geoffrin was no longer her own mistress; even when she came to herself again, she felt that she had to choose between her daughter and her friends, and blood carried the day: 'My daughter, she said with a smile,

is like Godefroy de Bouillon, she wanted to defend my tomb against the Infidels'. She privately sent to these same Infidels her kind messages and regrets; she sent them presents. Her reason was impaired, but her form of mind still subsisted, and she roused herself to utter some of those words which showed that she was still in her right mind. They were talking around her bed about the means which Governments might employ to make the people happy, and each one invented some grand project: 'Add to them, she said, the *procuring of pleasures*, a thing one does not pay sufficient attention to'.

She died in the parish of Saint-Roch on October 6, 1777. The name of Mme. Geoffrin and the nature of her influence have naturally recalled another amiable name, which it is too late here to compare with hers. The Mme. Geoffrin of our days, Mme. Récamier, had the advantages over the other in possessing youth, beauty, poetry, the graces, the star on her brow, let us add, a kindness not indeed more inventive, but more angelic. In governing her much more extensive and considerable salon, Mme. Geoffrin had the advantage of a more solid reason, a reason more at home, so to say, which went to fewer expenses and made fewer advances, fewer sacrifices to the taste of others; it was that unique good sense of which Horace Walpole has given us so good an idea, a mind not only delicate and shrewd, but just and *penetrating*.

GOETHE AND BETTINA¹

Monday, July 29, 1850.

WE have seen, it may be remembered, Jean-Jacques Rousseau in correspondence with one of his lady admirers who had presumed to fall in love with him. Mme. de La Tour-Franqueville, after reading the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, works herself up, thinks herself a Julie d'Étange, and writes very passionate letters to the great writer, who treats her rather ill and like the misanthrope that he is. It is curious to see how differently, in an analogous case, the great poet of Germany, Goethe, treated one of his young admirers, who declared her exalted love to him. But neither in this case any more than in the other must we expect a true, natural, reciprocal love, a love of two beings who exchange and confound the dearest feelings. It is not love properly so called, it is a religion; there is a priestess and a god. Only Rousseau was a sick and crotchety god, afflicted with gravel, who had fewer good than bad days: Goethe is a superior, calm, serene, equable god, in good health and benevolent, the Olympian Jupiter who looks and smiles.

In the spring of 1807, there was at Frankfort a charming girl, nineteen years of age, and so small that she appeared only twelve or thirteen. Bettina Brentano, the daughter of an Italian father settled and married at Frankfort, belonged to a very eccentric family, all the members of which had a stamp of singularity and whimsicality. It was a well-known saying in the town, that 'where madness ends with others it only begins with the Brentanos'. The little Bettina would not have regarded these words as an insult: 'What others call extravagance is comprehensible to me,

¹ *Letters of Goethe and Bettina*, translated from the German by Sébastien Albin.

she said, and forms part of an inner knowledge that I cannot express'. She had in her the demon, the elf, the imp, all that is most opposed to the bourgeois and formalist spirit, with which she was in open warfare. Still an Italian by her imagination, which was coloured, picturesque and lucid, she combined with it a German dreaminess and exaltation, which at times she seemed to carry to the point of hallucination and illuminism. 'There is in me, she said, a demon which is opposed to all that tries to make for reality'. Poetry was her natural world. Her feeling for art and nature was Italian; but this feeling, commenced in the Italian manner, became transformed, and too often terminated in vapours and mists, after passing through all the colours of the rainbow. In short, in spite of so many rare qualities which adorned the little Bettina and made a marvel of her, she only lacked what we might simply call *French good sense*, which is perhaps not compatible with all those other gifts. It seemed as if the Brentano family, coming from Italy to Germany, had passed not through France but through the Tyrol, in company with some troop of gay gipsies. For the rest, these defects which I indicate may become marked as we grow older; but at nineteen it is only an additional piquancy and charm.

In speaking so freely of Bettina, I almost need to ask pardon, for Bettina Brentano, now Frau von Arnim, the widow of Achim von Arnim, one of the distinguished poets of Germany, is living at Berlin, surrounded by the most noteworthy men, enjoying a consideration due not only to high mental qualities, but also to excellent virtues of heart and character. After being so long a roguish elf she is, we are assured, one of the most devoted of feminine hearts. But it was she herself who, in 1835, two years after Goethe's death, published this Correspondence which fully reveals her to us, which permits us, which obliges us to speak of her so freely and so boldly. This book, translated into French by a woman of merit who hides herself behind the pen-name of *Sébastien Albin*, is most curious and calculated more than any other to disclose the differences which separate the German spirit from ours. The author's preface begins with the words: '*This book is for the good and not for the wicked*'. Which is as much as to say: *Honni soit qui mal y pense!*

It was this girl of nineteen then, Bettina, who one day suddenly began to love the great poet Goethe with an ideal love, and before she had yet seen him. One morning when, sitting in her perfumed and silent garden, she was musing on her isolation, the idea of Goethe presented itself to her mind; she knew him only by reputation, by his books, by the ill even she sometimes heard tell around her of his cold and indifferent character. Her imagination took fire at once, and the object of her worship was found.

Goethe was then fifty-eight years old; in his youth he had been a little in love with Bettina's mother. He had been living for long years at Weimar, at the little court of Karl-August, in favour, or rather in friendship and intimacy with the prince, in a calm, varied, universal study, in incessant and easy fertility of production, and at the height of felicity, genius and glory. Goethe's mother lived at Frankfort; Bettina became intimate with her, and began to love, study and divine the son in the person of that so remarkable mother, so worthy of the man she had brought into the world.

This old mother of Goethe, *Frau Rath Goethe*, as they called her, so lofty, noble, I was about to say august in character, full of great words and memorable conversations, likes nothing better than to hear her son spoken of; when you speak of him to her she has the *large eyes of a child* which she fixes upon you, from which shines the most perfect contentment. She has made Bettina her favourite; the latter, when she enters, sits upon a little stool at her feet, begins a conversation at random, disturbs the gravity of the surroundings, and takes every kind of liberty, sure of being always pardoned. The worthy Frau von Goethe, who has in her the sense of reality and good sense, has understood at once that this love of the girl for her son would lead to nothing, that this flame, this *rocket* fire, would burn nobody. She jests with the girl on her dreams, and the latter pays her back in elfish tricks; and, whilst rallying her on her dreams, she takes advantage of them, for there is not a day when, in her solitude, this happy mother does not think of her son, 'and these thoughts, she says, are gold to me'. But to whom should she speak of him, before whom should she count her gold, that gold which is not for the profane,

if not before Bettina ? So when the madcap is absent, when she is roaming about the banks of the Rhine, which often happens, when she plays truant at every old tower and every rock, she is sadly missed by her dear Frau Rath : ' Hasten back home soon, she writes to her. This year I am not as I was last ; sometimes I am anxious about you, and I cannot help thinking for hours together of Wolfgang (Goethe's forename), still like a small child playing at my feet ; then how prettily he could play with his brother Jacob and make up stories for him. I must have somebody to tell this to, *and nobody listens as well as you*. I truly wish you were here, at my side '.

Bettina returns then to the mother of the man she reveres and adores ; and there are endless conversations on Goethe's childhood, on his early promise, on the circumstances of his birth, on the pear-tree which his grandfather planted to mark that auspicious day, and which prospered so well, on the *green chair* his mother sat on when she told him endless tales which excited his wonder, on the omens and the first indications of his awakening genius. Never was the infancy of a god watched and recollected in its slightest events with a more pious curiosity. Once when he was crossing the street with several other children, his mother and a lady who was with her at the window, remarked that he walked *with great majesty*, and told him that this manner of holding himself straight distinguished him from other boys of his age. ' I will begin with that, he replied ; later I will distinguish myself by all kinds of things '. ' And that has come true ', added the mother. Bettina knows all about these beginnings better than Goethe himself ; to her he subsequently refers, when he wants to recall them and record them in his Memoirs, and she will be right when she says to him : ' As for me, what is my life but a deep mirror of thine ? '

One day, Goethe was already a handsome young man, the handsomest among his contemporaries ; he was very fond of skating, and he persuaded his mother to come and see his skill. There was a fine wintry sun. Goethe's mother, who was fond of splendour, put on ' a fur pelisse of crimson velvet, with a long tail and gold fastenings ', and she drove in a carriage with some friends :

' Arrived at the Main, she relates, we saw my son skating. He flew like an arrow through the crowd of skaters ; his cheeks

were reddened by the keen air, and his auburn hair was entirely unpowdered. As soon as he saw my crimson pelisse, he came up to the carriage and looked at me with a very gracious smile : Well ! what do you want, I said ? Mother, you are not cold in the carriage, give me your velvet cloak. But surely you will not wear it ? Certainly I will. Well, there I was, taking off my good warm pelisse ; he puts it on, throws the tail over his arm, and shoots over the ice *like a son of the gods*. Ah ! Bettina, if you had seen him ! you could not see anything more handsome ; I clapped my hands with joy ! I shall see him all my life, appearing from under one arch of the bridge and disappearing by another ; the wind lifted the tail of the pelisse behind him, which he had let drop '.

And she adds that Bettina's mother was on the bank, and that it was her that her son wished to please on that day. But do you not perceive in this simple story of the mother all the pride of Latona : *A son of the gods* ? Might we not really think we were listening, not to the wife of a burgher of Frankfort, but to a Roman senator's wife, to a Roman empress or to a Cornelia ?

What this mother felt then, all Germany has since felt for Goethe : Goethe is the *German Fatherland*.

Reading these letters of Bettina, like her we catch ourselves studying Goethe in his mother, and we find him the greater, more simple at least and more natural, before the period of court etiquette, and in the lofty sincerity of his race. We could wish that in his genius he had been a little more mindful of his mother's words : ' Nothing is greater than the human in man '. It has been said that Goethe had little love for his mother, that his love was cold, that for long years, though only forty leagues distant from her, he did not go to see her ; he has been taxed with indifference and selfishness. I think that is exaggeration. We must think twice before denying Goethe any quality, for the first sight of him gives one the impression of a certain coldness, but this coldness often covers the first underlying quality. A mother does not continue to the last hour to love and revere a son to that degree, when he is guilty of serious wrong to her. Goethe's mother found nothing wrong in her son, and it is not for us to be more severe than she. This son loved his mother in his way, in the manner of both of them, and, though this filial manner was not perhaps one to be held up as a model, he was not ungrateful : '*Keep your heart warm*

for my mother, he wrote to Bettina . . . I should heartily like to be able to reward you for your attentions to my mother. I felt a *cold draught* with respect to her. Now that I know you to be near her, I am reassured, I feel warm'. Yet we cannot help smiling at this *cold draught*; Fontenelle could not have expressed himself better. I have sometimes thought that we might define Goethe for our use, a *Fontenelle clothed in poetry*. At the time when he lost his mother, Bettina wrote to him, alluding to the cold disposition which he was supposed to have, which was averse to all pain: 'They say that you turn away from what is sad and irreparable: do not turn aside from the picture of your dying mother; know how loving and wise she was in her last moment, and how much the *poetic element* predominated in her'. By this touch she shows well that she knows his tender spot. Goethe replies with words which show his sincere gratitude for all the attentions and all the *rejuvenation* that his mother owed to Bettina in her old age. But from that day she who had formed the chief link between them was missed, and their connexion soon suffered from it.

However, I have said that Bettina had become enamoured of Goethe, and it might be asked by what signs this love was known. Oh! it was not a vulgar love; it was not even a natural love, like Dido's, Juliet's, Virginia's, one of those loves that burn and consume until desire has been satisfied: it was an ideal love, more than a love of the head, and not entirely a love of the heart. I cannot quite explain it, and Bettina herself was much at a loss. The fact is that, gifted with a lively imagination, with an exquisite poetic sense, with a passionate feeling for nature, she personified all her tastes and all her youthful inspirations in Goethe's figure, and loved him with transport as the living type of all she dreamed of. So this love was by no means her torment, but rather her happiness: 'I know a secret, she said: when two beings are united, and divine genius is with them, it is the greatest possible happiness'. And in general it was enough for her that this union was ideal and spiritual. Knowing life and the senses as he did, no less than the ideal, he had at once classed this love, and he did not distrust it as long as he did not allow it to come too near him. The privilege of the gods is, as we know, eternal youth: even at fifty-eight Goethe could not have

been so old and hardened as to support every day without danger the proximity and the intimacy, the innocent provocations of Bettina. But Bettina lived at a distance; she wrote him letters full of life, brilliant with sensations, colours, sounds and arabesques of every kind, which agreeably interested and rejuvenated him. It was a new creature, full of charm, which offered itself to his observation as poet and naturalist. She reopened to him quite an unexpected *book of admirable images and charming pictures*. For him this was as good a book to read as another, the more so as his name was framed in an aureole on every page of it. He called these pages of Bettina *the Gospels of Nature*: 'Continue to preach, he said, thy Gospels of Nature'. He felt himself the god *made man* of that gospel. Above all, she restored to him, and *usefully* for his talent as an artist, the impressions and the freshness of the past which he had lost in his rather artificial life: 'My recollections of youth know all that you tell me, he wrote; they are to me like the distant past that one suddenly and distinctly recalls, though one had long forgotten it'. He does not cheapen himself to her, but he never repels her; he replies to her just enough to encourage her to continue.

Their first meeting was a strange scene, and from the way in which she tells of it, we see well that she is not in France, and has no fear of exciting ridicule. It was the end of April, 1807; she was accompanying her sister and brother-in-law, who had to go to Berlin, and had promised her to return by Weimar. They had to pass through the armies which occupied the country. She travelled in man's clothes, mounted on the box of the coach in order to have a better view, assisting at every stage to unharness and harness the horses, firing off a pistol in the woods in the morning, climbing the trees like a squirrel. For, we may say in passing, one of Bettina's qualities was that she was active as a squirrel, as a lizard (Goethe called her *little mouse*). Whenever she is able she climbs trees, rocks, arcades of Gothic churches, and strikes attitudes in fun. One evening at sunset, in one of her elfish moods, she climbed up to the Gothic sculptures of Cologne Cathedral, and she had the delight of writing to Goethe's mother: 'Frau Rath, how terrified you would have been to see me, from the middle of the Rhine, *sitting on a Gothic rose*!' 'I prefer dancing to walking, she says again somewhere, and I would rather fly than dance'.

Bettina, running about, playing and gambolling, is this time on the road to Weimar. She arrives after several nights spent without sleep on the box of the coach. On arrival she hastens to Wieland, who knew her family, and provides herself with a note from him to Goethe. She enters and is shown in. After waiting a few moments, the door opens and Goethe appears :

' There he stood, serious, solemn, and he looked at me with fixed eyes. I think I stretched out my hands to him ; I soon lost all consciousness. Goethe caught me quickly to his heart : *Poor child ! have I frightened you ?* Those were the first words he uttered and they penetrated my heart. He led me into his room and placed me on the sofa opposite him. We were both silent. At last he broke the silence : " You will have read in the Gazette, he said, that a few days ago we suffered a great loss by the death of the Duchess Amalie (the Dowager-Duchess of Saxe-Weimar).—Ach ! I do not read the Gazette, I replied.—Indeed ! I thought that everything that happened in Weimar interested you ?—No, nothing interests me but you, and I am much too impatient to read a Gazette ?—You are a dear child ". Long pause. I was still banished to that tiresome sofa, trembling and timid. You know it is impossible for me to remain sitting like a well-bred person. Alas ! mother (it is Goethe's mother she is writing to), how can one behave as I did ! I exclaimed : " I cannot remain on this sofa ! " And I sprang up. " Very well ! make yourself at home," he said. I threw myself on his neck, and he drew me upon his knees and locked me to his heart '.

We must remember, for our assurance, that we are in Germany. There she is then, on his heart, that is good for a moment ; but the strange thing is that she remained there long enough to go to sleep, for she had spent several nights in travel, and was dying with fatigue. Only after she was awake did she begin to talk a little. Goethe picked a leaf of the vine which climbed up his window, and said : ' This leaf and your cheek have the same freshness, the same down '. You think perhaps that this scene is quite childish, but shortly after Goethe speaks to her of the most serious matters, and from the depth of his soul ; he speaks to her of Schiller, who died two springs before ; and, when Bettina interrupted him to say that she cared little for Schiller, he began to explain to her that poet's nature, so different from his own, and yet so great, so generous, which he too had had the generosity to em-

brace and comprehend so fully. These words of Goethe on Schiller betrayed emotion. On the evening of that day, or the next day, Bettina saw Goethe again at Wieland's house, and, as she showed jealousy on account of a bunch of violets which he held in his hand, and which she supposed a woman had given him, he threw it to her, saying: 'Can you not be satisfied with my giving them to you?' It is a strange medley, these first scenes at Weimar, half childish, half mystic, and from the beginning so passionate; it would not have done, however, to recommence them every day. At the second meeting, which took place at Wartburg, after a few months' interval, Bettina's voice failing to express herself, Goethe put his hand on her mouth and said: 'Speak with your eyes, I understand everything'. And when he saw that the eyes of the charming child, *the dark and bold child*, were full of tears, he closed them, adding with much reason: 'Calm! calm! it is that which becomes us two'. But are you not tempted to ask, when you read of these scenes: *What would Voltaire say?*

Let us come out of our French habits a little, to form a correct idea of Goethe. Nobody has spoken better than he of Voltaire even, nobody has defined and understood him better as the excellent and complete type of the French genius; let us try in our turn to do the like for him, by understanding him, the complete type of the German genius. Goethe is with Cuvier, the last great man the century has seen die. Goethe's characteristic genius was all-embracing, universal. A great naturalist and poet, he studies every object, and sees it both in reality and in the ideal; he studies it in so far as it is an individual, he raises it and places it in its rank in the general order of nature; and yet he inhales the perfume of poetry that everything conceals within itself. Goethe drew poetry from everything; he was curious of everything. There was not a man, not a branch of study, that he did not inquire into with a curiosity, a precision which desired to know all about it, to grasp it in its smallest details. One might have thought it was an exclusive passion; then, when it was finished and known, he turned away and passed on to another object. In his noble house, which had on its frontispiece the word: *Salve!* he exercised hospitality to strangers, receiving them

without distinction, talking with them in their own language, making each serve as a subject for his study, for his knowledge, having no other aim in everything but *the enlarging of his taste*: calm, serene, without gall, without envy. When a thing or a man displeased him, or was not worth troubling any more about, he turned away and looked elsewhere in this vast universe, where he had but to choose; not indeed indifferent, but unattached; curious with insistence, with solicitude, but without going to the bottom; benevolent as one imagines a god to be; truly *Olympian*: this word does not raise a smile on the other bank of the Rhine. If a new poet appeared, a talent stamped with originality a Byron, a Manzoni, Goethe studied him at once with extreme interest, and without bringing to the study any personal foreign feeling; he had a *love of genius*. To Manzoni, for example, whom he did not know at all, when the *Conte di Carmagnola* came into his hands, he is at once attracted, he plunges into the study of this play, discovering in it a thousand intentions, a thousand beauties, and one day, in his periodical work (*On Art and Antiquity*), into which he poured the superabundance of his thoughts, he announces Manzoni to Europe. When an English review attacked him, he defended him with all sorts of reasons that Manzoni had certainly never dreamed of. Then when he saw M. Cousin and heard that he was a friend of Manzoni, he began to question him minutely, with an insatiable curiosity, on the smallest physical and moral particulars of the person, until he had formed a good picture of this object, this *being*, this new product of nature which was called *Manzoni*, just as he, as a botanist, would have done with a plant. Thus with everything. To Schiller he was admirable in his solicitude, with his advice. He saw this ardent, enthusiastic young man, who was carried away by his genius without being able to guide it. A thousand differences, which appeared to be antipathies, separated them. Goethe none the less used his influence to have Schiller appointed Professor of History at Jena. Then, a happy accident having brought them together, the fusion took place, he insensibly took in hand this genius that was still seeking its true path. The Correspondence, since published, shows Goethe advising, exercising a salutary influence upon him without asserting

himself, leading him in the right way, as a father or brother might have done. He called Schiller a *magnificent Being*. Goethe understood everything in the universe—all except two things perhaps, the *Christian* and the *Hero*. That was a weak spot in him which came a little from the heart. Leonidas and Pascal, especially the latter, it is not very sure that he did not regard them in the light of two enormities, two *monstrosities* in the order of nature.

Goethe loved neither sacrifice nor torment. When he saw one sick, sad and self-absorbed, he recalled how he wrote Werther to get rid of an importunate suicidal idea: 'Do as I did, he added, bring into the world this child which torments you, and he will no more hurt your bowels'. His mother also knew the recipe; she wrote one day to Bettina, who had lost a young friend by suicide, the Canoness Gunderode, and had become quite melancholy in consequence: 'My son has said: *What vexes us, we must labour off*. And when he had a grief, he made a poem of it. I have told you many a time, write the story of Gunderode, and send it to Weimar; my son desires it; he will keep it, and at least it will no more weigh on your heart'.

Such was, in so far as a rapid survey may embrace him, the man that Bettina had set herself to love, but whom she loved as becomed them both, that is to say, with a flame that caresses without burning.

From that day of the interview, and after returning to Frankfort, she wrote to him on all sorts of subjects, sent him all her thoughts, now in the note of a hymn of adoration, now in a gay and playful tone. Sometimes the effusion to which she gives herself is very strange and verges upon the ridiculous: 'When I am in the midst of nature, whose intimate life your mind has made me understand, often I confound your mind and that life. I lie down on the green grass and embrace it . . .' Too often she repeats to him: 'Thou art beautiful, thou art great and admirable, and better than anything I have known . . . like the sun, thou crossest the night . . .' In these moments she speaks to him as one might speak to Jehovah. But at the same time there is a charming lightness and freshness of thought and expression. The letter which might be called *Under the Lime-tree*, because of a hollow lime which is described in it, is quite full of life, of the

twittering of birds, the humming of bees in the sun's ray. In these moments, addressing the poet and complaining that she is not loved as she loves, she is right when she exclaims : ' Am I not the bee flying around and bringing the nectar from every flower ? ' But Goethe is like Jean-Jacques, like every poet : he is in love, but *in love with the heroine of his romance and his dream*. Rousseau would not have given the Julie of his creation even for Mme. d'Houdetot. Bettina has moments of good sense and flashes of true passion when she perceives and complains of this inequality of exchange : ' Oh ! do not sin against me, she says to Goethe, do not make thyself a *graven image* and then worship it, whilst thou hast the possibility of creating between us a wonderful and spiritual bond '. But this quite spiritual and metaphysical bond she dreams of, this love *in the air*, one might say to her, is that the true bond ?

Differing from Rousseau, Goethe is charming to her even when keeping her at a distance ; he instantly, by a gracious and poetic word, makes reparation for his real or apparent coolness, and covers it with a smile. That lovable and joyous child recalls to his mind the time when he was better, more truly happy, when he had not yet turned away his primitive, internal and more delicate soul and partly sacrificed it to the contemplation and the reflection of the outside world. He acknowledges that he owes to her the rejuvenation of his mind and a return to spiritual life. He often sends her back her own thoughts, clothed in rhythm ; he fixes them in a sonnet : ' Adieu, my charming child, he says to her ; write me soon, that I may soon have something to *translate* '. She provides him with *themes* for poetry : he embroiders and executes them. Shall we presume to say that it often appears to us that the natural flower has in the process become an artificial flower, more brilliant, more polished, but also colder, and that it has lost some of its perfume ? He appears himself, by the way, to recognize this superiority of a rich and capricious nature, which displays itself every time under an ever surprising, ever new form : ' Thou art ravishing, my young dancer, he says ; at every movement thou throwest us unexpectedly a wreath '.

The fact is, that she too understands him so well, she knows so well how to admire him ! From these letters of Bettina we might extract not only an ideal Goethe, but a

living, real Goethe, still handsome and superb under the features of the first old age, smiling under his tranquil brow, 'with his large black eyes a little open, and filled with amiability when they look at her'. She is so sensible of the *dignity in him which comes from greatness of mind*: 'When I saw thee for the first time, what appeared remarkable in thee and inspired me at the same time with a deep veneration and a decided love, was that thy whole person expresses what King David says of man: *Every man should be a king to himself*'. And this dignity in Goethe, in the talent as in the person, is very well wedded to the Graces, not the tender or artless Graces, but the severe and somewhat thoughtful Graces: 'Friend, she says again to him with passion, I might be jealous of the Graces; they are women, and they continually go before thee; where thou appearest sacred Harmony appears with thee'. She understands him in the different forms that his talent has clothed, under the transitory and stormy shape of Werther, as under the more tranquil and superior form which triumphed: 'Superb torrent, oh! how noisily you then traversed the regions of youth, and how you flow now, a tranquil stream, through the meadows!' With what jealous disdain she attacks Mme. de Staël, who at first expected to find Goethe a second Werther, and was quite grieved and disappointed to find him so different, as if she judged him to be inferior! 'Mme. de Staël was doubly mistaken, said Bettina, the first time in her expectation, the second in her judgment'.

Yet this lively girl, this mobile elf, who has in her something of the airy spirit of Mab or Titania, has also, like *Mignon* in *Wilhelm Meister*, Italian blood in her veins. Bettina may make herself out as German as she likes, she cannot be entirely satisfied with that *esthetic* and ideal veneration which does not suffice nature. There are moments when, though not quite aware of it, she desires more; she would like to spend a whole spring with her august friend. She would like to give herself entirely in spirit, but he should also give himself in return: 'Can one receive a present without giving oneself too as a present?' she remarks very truly. What is not given entirely and for good, can we call that a gift? Now Goethe shows himself, but he does not give himself. He writes her short letters, and sometimes through a secretary; she is angry then, and sulks. She asks little, but she expects this little

to be entirely from him : ' Thou hast me in my letters, she says ; but have I thee in thine ? ' Since the death of Goethe's mother, Bettina has more reason to complain ; for that good mother knew her son and explained to the young girl how the poet's emotion was to be found in those few lightly traced lines, which would have appeared a little thing coming from another : ' I know Wolfgang well, she said ; he has written that with his heart full of emotion '. But when Bettina has no longer that clear-sighted interpreter to reassure her, she sometimes doubts. For the rest, grief can find no room among all those capricious explosions and brilliant rockets, and when we read her, we begin to repeat with Goethe himself that those are pleasing illusions : ' For who could reasonably believe in so much love ? It is better to accept all that as a *dream* '.

If Goethe had been really in love, observe that he would often have had cause for jealousy ; for Bettina falls in love by the way with many things and many people. I pass over the handsome French hussars, the young Munich artists, to whom she preaches art, a palpable, Italian art, not a misty art ; but Goethe's chief rivals in this young enthusiast's soul, are the Tyrolese hero Andreas Hofer and the great composer Beethoven. Hofer, the hero of the Tyrolese insurrection, is Bettina's first infidelity. In the spring of 1809, when war breaks out on all sides, and battles of the giants are about to be waged, Bettina cannot be indifferent ; the note of the clarion prevents her from sleeping. From Munich where she is at the time, she follows with an unparalleled anxiety all the phases of that holy and patriotic levy of the Tyrolese, sacrificing themselves to their Emperor who abandons and in the end betrays them. Instead of the usual fanciful trifles in which she disported herself, like a bee or a butterfly, Goethe is quite astonished to receive from her burning letters, in which she says : ' O Goethe ! why cannot I go to Tyrol, and arrive in time to die the death of heroes ' ! The capture and death of Hofer, who is allowed to be shot, tear from her words of pain and lofty moral eloquence. Goethe's replies to these heroic accents are curious. During this time, during the days of Wagram, he was writing his cold romance *Wahlverwandschaften* (*Elective Affinities*), in order to turn away his thoughts from the misfortunes of his time. Bettina's ardent cry draws from him this

peaceful reflection: 'Putting thy last letter with the others, I find that *it closes an interesting epoch* (1807-1810). Thou hast led me, through a *charming labyrinth* of philosophical, historical and musical opinions, to the *temple of Mars*, and in all and everywhere thou still hast thy healthy energy . . .' There we have indeed the naturalist-contemplator who appraises and reflects the impressions around him, without sharing them. He congratulates her on her *energy*, he applauds it, but he can dispense with it. From the point of view he has taken up, he sees in these scenes, where masses of men have sacrificed themselves to great causes, only *capricious transformations of life*. In the spilled blood of the Tyrolese heroes he saw only a perfume of poetry: 'Thou art right, he said to Bettina, to say that the blood of heroes shed on the earth is reborn in every flower'. Once more we say, heroism is not Goethe's superior side.

Goethe has been called an Olympian god, but he was certainly not a god of Homer's Olympus: when such battles are fought under Ilion's walls, Homer makes all his gods come down to them.

After Hofer, Beethoven must be counted as Bettina's second infidelity. From the first day she saw him in Vienna, in May, 1810, Bettina felt what she had felt for Goethe: she forgot the universe. The great composer, deaf, misanthropic, bitter with everybody, was to her, from the first visit, open, confiding, overflowing with good and magnificent words: he sat down at once to the piano and played and sang for her his divinest songs. Charmed by her way of listening, her frank and artless applause, he accompanied her back to her house, and said a thousand things about art on the way:

'He spoke so loud and stopped so often, she relates, that it required courage to stay to listen to him; but what he said was so unexpected, so passionate, that I forgot we were in the street. They were much astonished at our house to see him arrive with me. After dinner, he sat down quite spontaneously to the piano, and played long and wonderfully; *his genius and his pride fermented together*'.

We must admit that it is a rare gift and a proof of genius too, to be able in that degree to tame a genius. Beethoven was informed of Bettina's connexion with

Goethe ; he spoke to her much of the latter, he wished her to repeat his thoughts on art to him. These conversations of Beethoven are admirably reproduced by Bettina : the simplicity of a genius who has a sense of his power, who disdains his own time and has faith in the future, a grave, energetic, passionate nature, are there depicted in memorable words. This Beethoven quite reminds me of Milton. We are here, observe it well, with the greatest of men, with the very great ; and it is Bettina's glory to have been a worthy interpreter of Beethoven to Goethe. Goethe is touched, and replies with feeling, with kindness. They are two kings, two *Magi* who greet each other from afar through this little elfish page who carries messages so well, and this time with grandeur. Here again Goethe preserves his character of a collector who studies and seeks a natural explanation of beings and things. He is charmed and enchanted to see so great an *individual* as Beethoven added to his collection and his acquaintance : ' I have had much pleasure, he says, in seeing reflected in myself this picture of an original genius '. The great mirror of Goethe's intelligence involuntarily quivers, when it reflects a new object worthy of it. Goethe and Beethoven met two years later at Toeplitz. In this meeting of two geniuses, equals and brothers in many respects, one of whom judges the other, it is manifestly Beethoven who preserves the moral superiority.

We have two letters from him to Bettina. It is evident that the composer was touched to the heart by this young girl who could listen so well and reply to him with her beautiful expressive eyes. One thinks on reading these two admirable letters : Why did she not love Beethoven instead of Goethe ? she would have found one to return gift for gift. Beethoven was certainly as much in love with art as Goethe could be, and art would always have remained his first passion ; but he suffered, he lived superb and sad in his genius, isolated from the rest of men, and he would have liked to be still more isolated from them ; he exclaimed with pain and sympathy : ' Dear, very dear Bettina, who understands art ? with whom can one talk of that great divinity ? ' With her he could have poured out his soul ; for, ' dear child, he said, we have long professed the same opinion on all things '.

Everything must come to an end. Bettina married in

1811 Achim von Arnim, and her connexion with Goethe received a check, though it never ceased. With all possible complaisance of imagination, it was not possible to continue the dream as before. This connexion gradually passed into the state of an unchangeable cult and a memory. Bettina by degrees made relics of all that had been the perfume and incense of her youth.

I should like to have been able to give a more complete and correct idea of a book which is so far from us, from our way of feeling and smiling, so far in every way from the Gallic race, of a book into which there enters so much fancy, grace, so many lofty views, so much madness, where good sense appears only disguised in caprice and playfulness. One day, after a long walk with Bettina in the park of Weimar, Goethe compared her with the Greek woman of Mantinea, who gave Socrates lessons in love, and added: 'You do not say a single sensible word, but your folly is more instructive than the Greek woman's wisdom'. What could we add to such a judgment?

But, on the day after reading this book, if you would fully return to the truth of human nature and passion, and purge your brain of all chimerical velleities and all mists, I strongly advise you to read again the *Dido* episode in the *Æneid*, a few scenes of *Romeo and Juliet*, or again the *Francesco da Rimini* passage in Dante, or simply *Manon Lescaut*.

LE SAGE¹

Monday, August 5, 1850.

Gil Blas, in spite of the Spanish costume and all the imitations which may have been discovered in it, is one of the most French books that we have. For the quality of the work it matters little whether the author got his ground-plan here or there, whether he inserted such or such a borrowed episode: the merit is not in the general invention, but in the conduct, in the management of every scene and every picture, in the detail of the dialogue and the narrative, in the easy air and in the turn of gaiety which unites the whole. In prose and in form of a novel, it is a merit, an originality of the same kind as that of *La Fontaine*. Le Sage's touch is quite French, and if our literature possesses a book which is good to read again after every invasion, after every disturbance in the order of morality, of politics and taste, to calm one's humours, to restore one's mind to the point of view and refresh one's style, it is *Gil Blas*.

Le Sage was born, developed his talent and appeared before the public under Louis XIV. Younger by twenty-four years than La Bruyère, and by seventeen than Fénelon, six years older than Saint-Simon, he belongs to that generation of writers who were made to adorn the following epoch, and whose appearance consoled the great reign at its decline. His more exact biographers make out that he was born in 1668 in the peninsula of Rhuys, in Lower Brittany, not far from Saint-Gildas, where Abailard was abbot. From the heart of that energetic and rude province, which has given us some great writers, more or less revolutionary, some innovators,

¹ *Gil Blas*. By Le Sage.

La Mennais, Broussais, and another René, Alain-René Le Sage came to us mature, shrewd, gay, already cured of all prejudices, and the least stubborn of minds : we can find the Breton stamp only in his pride of soul and his independence of character. How and through what trials, through what adversities did he attain so early to that knowledge of life, to that entire and perfect maturity for which nature had destined him ? We know very few events of his life. He studied at the Collège de Vannes, where he found, it is said, an excellent master. He lost his mother at nine, his father at fourteen ; his father was a notary and registrar like Boileau's father. His guardian was an uncle who neglected him. Arriving in Paris at twenty-two to go through his course of Philosophy and Law, he lived the life of a young man and had no doubt some of those ' bachelor's ' adventures which he afterwards related and diversified so well. His biographers are agreed in saying that he had a pleasant face, a good figure, and that he was a very handsome man in his youth. They speak of an early gallant liaison with a lady of quality. In any case, this purely worldly life of Le Sage was short, since we find him at twenty-six marrying the daughter of a Paris bourgeois, herself only twenty-two. From this time he leads a domestic and laborious existence, a life of subjection ; and from the Rue du Cœur-Volant, Faubourg Saint-Germain, and afterwards from the Rue Montmartre where he lives, or from some other obscure dwelling, issue those charming works which seem to be the mirror of the world.

It appears, however, that immediately after his marriage he tried to make his living by a regular occupation, and that he was for a time in a financial office in the provinces, as clerk to some farmer-general of taxes ; he remained there only a short time, and returned with a horror and contempt for the collectors of the revenue, whom he since stigmatized on every occasion. Le Sage's satire is ordinarily gay, light and piquant, without any bitterness ; but, whenever the revenue collectors, the Turcaret, are in question, he sharpens his arrow and pitilessly plunges it, as if he had some reprisals to make. I make the same remark in regard to actors, of whom he often had cause to complain. These are the only two classes whom the amiable satirist attacks with vehemence and with an

almost inveterate hatred, he whose raillery is generally tempered by good humour and bonhomie.

Having become a man of letters, Le Sage found a protector and useful adviser in the Abbé de Lyonue, one of the sons of the able minister. The Abbé de Lyonue knew the Spanish language and literature, and brought them to Le Sage's notice. The latter knew Spanish at a time when people in France were beginning to neglect it, and he drew from it the more freely, as from a mine still rich which was becoming unknown. Let us form a correct idea of Le Sage, and, to better appreciate his charming genius, not exaggerate. Le Sage proceeded a little like the authors of that time, like the authors of almost all times. He wrote from day to day, volume by volume; he took his subjects where he could, wherever they conveniently came to hand; he made a *trade* of literature. But he did so with naturalness, with facility, with a gift for narrative and staging, which was his peculiar talent, with a vein of raillery and humour which extended over everything, with a lively, gay, conventional morality which was his manner of feeling and thinking. After some rather unfortunate attempts at translation and imitation, he had his two first successes in 1707: the pretty comedy of *Crispin rival de son maître* and *Le Diable boiteux*.

Le Diable boiteux, in respect of its title, frame-work and characters, is taken from the Spanish; but Le Sage brought the whole to the Parisian point of view; he knew our measure; he handled his original at his pleasure, with ease, with appropriateness; he scattered over it topical allusions; he blended what he preserved and what he added into an amusing picture of manners, which appeared both novel and indulgent, unexpected and recognizable. This book is the one which Le Sage will subsequently remake and recommence in a hundred ways, under one form or another, a comprehensive picture of human life, an animated review of all conditions, with the intrigues, the vices, the absurdities proper to each. Imagine the state of people's minds at the time when *Le Diable boiteux* appeared, that peevish, bored, calamitous old age of Louis XIV, that forced piety which oppressed all, the decorum which had become a restraint and embarrassment. Suddenly Asmodeus perches himself with his

student at the top of a tower, say the top of the towers of Notre-Dame ; from there with a turn of the hand he removes all the roofs of the town, and one sees laid bare all the hypocrisies, the pretences, the universal under-side of the cards. One has the panorama in full noon-tide. This Asmodeus had a wild success ; they did not give him time even to dress, say the critics of the day ; people rushed post-haste to carry him away unbound. Two editions were published in a year. ' They are working at a third, announced the *Journal de Verdun* (December, 1707) ; two lords of the Court drew their swords in Barbin's shop, to have the last copy of the second edition '.

Boileau one day when Jean-Baptiste Rousseau was with him, having caught his little lackey with the *Diable boiteux* in his hands, threatened to dismiss him if the book remained in the house. That is, indeed, a success which is sanctified and enlivened by Boileau's anger.

For a little lackey the book was perhaps not very moral ; it is certainly not the morality of the Catechism that it preaches, it is the morality of practical life : to be the dupe of nothing and nobody. We may say of it what was so well said of *Gil Blas* : This book is moral like experience. Even in his first work Le Sage's character outlines itself wonderfully well ; it is La Bruyère in scene and action, without a trace of effort. The *Diable boiteux* very well preceded the *Lettres Persanes*, but it goes before with a light step, without any pretension to smartness and without fatigue ; there is not a shadow of *manner* in Le Sage. Le Sage's characteristics are the gay and piquant words which escape from him by the way. Thus Asmodeus, speaking of one of his brother devils with whom he had quarrelled : ' They reconciled us, he says, we embraced and since then we have been mortal enemies '.

Nothing more gay and amusing can be imagined than the little comedy of *Crispin rival de son maître*. One of the first scenes between the two valets, Crispin and La Branche, offers an example of that lightness in the comic vein, which is peculiar to Le Sage, whether on the stage or in the novel. The two valets, on their meeting again, tell each other of their adventures ; they have both once been regular rogues, and think they have mended by re-entering service. La Branche especially flatters himself on having reentered the right path ; he is serving a young

man called Damis : ' He is a pleasant fellow, he says ; he loves play, wine, women ; he is a universal man. Together we indulge in all sorts of debauches. That amuses me ; it keeps me out of mischief '. ' What an innocent life ! ' replies Crispin. And I will say : What excellent and innocent fooling it is, which so artlessly gives vice away ! In this play of *Crispin* Le Sage begins his attack upon the financiers : we get a glimpse of *Turcaret*. Crispin says to himself that he is tired of being a valet : ' Ah ! Crispin, it is your own fault ! You have always gone in for trifles ; you should presently shine in finance . . . with the wit I have, *morbleu* ! I might already have been bankrupt more than once '. And the final touch will serve as a transition to Le Sage's next comedy, when Oronte says to the two valets : ' You have wit, but you must make a better use of it, and, to make you honest, I will put you both in business '.

Le Sage had his happy opportuneness ; he divined and anticipated by little the moment when, at the death of Louis XIV, the orgy of the parvenus and the farmers of the revenue would commence. *Turcaret* was performed in 1709 ; the absurdities and turpitudes which signalized the triumph of Law's system are there stigmatized in advance. Here comedy denounced and preceded the exposure of vice and absurdity ; it might have prevented it if that had ever been possible. *Turcaret* is like *Tartufe*, both a comedy of character and a page in the history of morals. Molière wrote *Tartufe* a few years before the real *Tartufe* triumphed under Louis XIV : Le Sage wrote *Turcaret* a few years before *Turcaret* was at his pinnacle under the Regency. But, like so many vices of the Regency period, the real *Turcaret* issued from underneath the last years of Louis XIV. The performance met with all sorts of difficulties ; it required Monseigneur, the King's son to remove them. *Turcaret* was played by the order of *Monseigneur*, to whom we must be grateful for this mark of literary taste, the only one he ever showed.¹

Though he had great need of protection, in order to get

¹ This vein of *Turcaret* was new on the stage and still untouched, even after Molière : ' It is a remarkable thing, says Chamfort, that Molière, who spared nothing, did not launch a single shaft at the financiers. It is said that Molière and the comic dramatists of the time had Colbert's orders on that point '.

the better of the cabals of offended clerks and jealous authors, Le Sage held his ground, and yielded to no base complaisance. There we see the Breton in him. Before the play was acted, he had promised the Duchesse de Bouillon to read it to her. She counted upon the reading taking place before dinner; some business kept him, and he came late. When he appeared the Duchess said drily that he had wasted more than an hour of her time through waiting: 'Very well! Madame, replied Le Sage coolly, then I will make you gain two'. And making a bow, he left in spite of efforts to keep him. Collé, who tells the story, had it on good authority, and he applauds it like a man who is a little of the same race.

Setting aside this comedy of *Turcaret*, which was like a pitched battle, and in which Le Sage, warming to his work, endeavoured to make vice hateful, his satire in all his other writings preserves a character as pleasing as it is amusing, and it is that which forms its charm and originality. Such is the character which it presents especially in his novel *Gil Blas*, that facile and delightful masterpiece, with which his name is for ever associated.

Gil Blas was published successively in four volumes, the last of which followed at rather long intervals. The two first volumes appeared in 1715, the very year of Louis XIV's death. There emanated from the work a freshness of youth and a freedom of gait which suited the beginning of an emancipated epoch. What can we say of *Gil Blas* that has not been already said, that has not been felt and expressed by so many ingenious panegyrists, delicate and shrewd critics, and that every judicious reader has not thought for himself? So I will humbly content myself with repeating.¹ The author, in this long, well worked out and easy-going narrative, has tried to present human life as it is, with its diversities and adventures, with the queer situations resulting from the play of fortune and destiny, and especially with those which

¹ On *Gil Blas* and Le Sage one should read Walter Scott's *Notice*, M. Villemain's pages in the first volume of his *Tableau de la Littérature au 18^{me} siècle*, and the distinguished and well expressed *Eulogies* of M. Patin and M. Malitourne, who divided the French Academy prize in 1822. All the true literary judgments are there expressed. As to the question of imitations and borrowings, the sources upon which Le Sage drew for his *Gil Blas* and his other novels, an impartial and complete work on the subject remains still to be written.

the variety of our humours our tastes and faults bring into it Gil Blas is a man of very humble and ordinary birth of the quite lower middle class he soon shows himself wide awake a pretty fellow witty, his education has been so so and at seventeen he leaves his home to make his way in the world He passes by turns through every condition of life, through the most vulgar and base he is not too ill at ease in any of them though he ever strives to push himself and rise Gil Blas is at bottom simple and honest enough, credulous, vain easily caught, tricked at first in every way, by a parasite he meets casually, who lauds him to the skies by a sanctimonious valet by women, he is the dupe of his defects and sometimes of his virtues He is *schooled* in every sense and we serve our apprenticeship with him. An excellent subject for moral experiments we may say that Gil Blas *allows himself to be led* by circumstances, he does not forestall experiences he receives them He is not a man of genius, nor a man of great talent, nor one who has very much in him he is a sound and shrewd mind, easy going active, essentially docile, with every aptitude It is only a question of applying them well, which he does in the end he becomes apt for anything and at last deserves the eulogy which his friend Fabrice gives him *You have the universal tool* But he only deserves this praise quite at the end, and that encourages us, we feel, when reading the book, that we may without too much effort and presumption succeed some day like him

After reading *René* for the first time, one is seized with a profound and gloomy impression. We think we recognize ourselves in that chosen and exceptional nature, so elevated but so isolated, which has nothing in common with the run of humanity We search in our imagination for some unique misfortune, in order to dedicate ourselves to it and wrap ourselves in it in solitude We say to ourselves 'that a great soul must contain more sorrows than a little one', and we secretly add that we might indeed be that great soul. In fine, we leave that noble and disturbing reading prouder than before and more desolate.

There is nothing more opposite to *René* than *Gil Blas* It is both a mocking and a comforting book, a book which makes us fully enter into the current of life and the crowd of our fellow-men. When one is very gloomy, when one

believes in fatality, when you imagine that certain extraordinary things happen to you only, read *Gil Blas*, and yield to the impressions it gives you, you will find that he has had the same misfortune or one like it, that he accepted it as a simple mishap, and took comfort to himself.

All forms of life and human nature are met with in *Gil Blas*, all, except a certain ideal and moral elevation, which is a rare thing, no doubt, which is often simulated, but which is real enough in some occasions not to be entirely omitted in a complete picture of humanity. Le Sage, so cultured a man in other respects, had not this ideal in him. He was of opinion that 'the most perfect productions of the mind are those in which the defects are only slight, *as the most honest people are those who have the smallest vices*'. Nothing is more true than such a remark, and in *Gil Blas* he has given full expression to that view which allots a few little vices to the most honest. Gil Blas of all men, though he has no strongly marked innate vice, is on occasion very capable of almost all. He is naturally honest, as I have said, preferring good to evil in general, but easily letting himself go when opportunity, vanity or self-interest tempt him, not too much ashamed even when he has recovered. I know what allowance is to be made in such a case, to the necessity of creating amusement in a novel, to the conventions of this branch of literature, and also to that easy morality of a period which pardoned the rogueries of a Chevalier des Grieux, and laughed at those of the Chevalier de Grammont. We cannot, however, disguise the fact from ourselves that it was no doubt to keep him on a level with human nature that Gil Blas was not given a very lofty soul: he is good for everything, indifferently delicate according to circumstances, a valet before being a master, and a little of the race of the Figaros. Le Sage had very well observed one fact which other moralists had likewise remarked: what is perhaps most characteristic of men taken in the mass, and most calculated besides to astonish every time even those who think they know them best, is not so much their wickedness, nor their folly (they only yield to it by fits and starts); what is most astonishing in men and most inexhaustible, is their meanness and dulness. The author of *Gil Blas* knew it well: his protagonist, to remain a natural and average type, should

by no means be tuned to the pitch of a stoic or a hero. He represents nothing singular or unique, or even rare. Gil Blas, quite the opposite of René, is you, I, all the world. To that conformity of nature with all men, to his happy candour, to the ingenuousness of his sallies and his confessions he owes it that he remains, in spite of his vices, interesting still and likable in the eyes of the reader : as to respect, it has been wittily said, that is the last thing he expects of us.

In connexion with Gil Blas we have often heard the names of Panurge and Figaro. But Panurge, that most delicate creation of Rabelais' genius, is much more singular than Gil Blas ; he is a very differently qualified original, and endowed with a fantasy of his own, with a grotesque poetic vein. Whilst presenting certain sides of human nature, Panurge expressly caricatures, exaggerates them in a laughable way. Figaro, who is more of the lineage of Gil Blas, also has a verve, a spirit, a *brio* which has something lyrical. Gil Blas is more even, more in the habitual tone of all. He is ourselves, once more, as we pass through the different conditions and different ages.

The most competent judge in such matters, Walter Scott, has very well characterized the sort of lively, facile, witty, indulgent still and benevolent criticism that we find in *Gil Blas* : ' This work, he says, leaves the reader satisfied with himself and the human race '. That truly is a result which it seemed difficult to obtain on the part of a satirist who does not intend to flatter humanity : but neither does Le Sage wish to slander it or make it ugly ; he is content with showing it as it is, and always with a natural air and an amusing turn. Irony in him has no bitterness as it has in Voltaire. If it has not that air of the great world and of supreme distinction which is the stamp of Hamilton's irony, neither has it its refined causticity and its coldness. It is an irony which testifies to a healthy soul, an irony which remains, if we may say so, of good nature. He hastens along, he finds his sly touch, he continues to hasten, and does not insist. In him there is neither rancour nor bitterness. I emphasize this absence of bitterness which constitutes Le Sage's originality and his distinction as a satirist ; it is what makes him comforting even in his mockery. Thereby especially does he differ from Voltaire, who bites and

laughs in a bitter fashion. Remember *Candide* : Pangloss may be a cousin but he is not a brother of Gil Blas.

I would like to quote an example which may illustrate my whole idea. After many adventures, Gil Blas has entered the service of an old beau, who still prides himself on his gallantry, Don Gonzale Pacheco. This decrepit old man, who every morning makes up and paints himself afresh, has a friend, also an old man, who, on the contrary, is proud of his age, finds a satisfaction in appearing old, just as the other affects youth. One plays the Nestor, the other the Celadon ; they are two forms of one and the same vanity inherent in all men. After some very amusing scenes between the old beau and his mistress, who plays him false, scenes which find a counterpart in the conversations in the ante-room between Gil Blas and the lady's superannuated soubrette, who plies him with attentions, Gil Blas, having ascertained that his master is being deceived, takes upon himself to warn him. The old coxcomb is touched and thanks him, and returns to his mistress to break with her. But, by a quite natural and comic dénouement, the amorous old man, put on his guard, as he thinks, by Gil Blas, for which he is grateful to a certain degree, instead of quarrelling with his mistress, is reconciled to her. He comes back, a little ashamed of his weakness, and gently hints to Gil Blas that he is dismissed, at the same time half thanking him for his warning. Here we have a very neat example of that satire which is so true and so gay, without any malice. The master dismisses Gil Blas without being angry with him ; in fact, he sympathizes with him in the injustice he suffers, and even procures him a good situation ; and Gil Blas, though dismissed, does not abuse the old man ; he shows him up as he is with his senile, amorous, ridiculous passion, but still a bonhomme, and trying to reconcile a remnant of justice with his weakness. There is something of Terence in that satire.

There are numberless comedy scenes in Gil Blas, and they do not leave us much leisure to perceive the possible vulgarity or tediousness of certain episodes, certain sentimental tales which the author inserted here and there to swell his volumes, and which he copied from we know not where. The two first volumes of the work, after bringing before our eyes all sorts and conditions of men, thieves,

canons, doctors, authors, actors, leave Gil Blas as steward to Don Alphonse, and charged to make a restitution in his name. 'That was beginning the trade of steward where it should end'. The third volume, published in 1724, the most distinguished of all, shows us Gil Blas gradually ascending the steps from floor to floor; and, as the sphere becomes more elevated, the lessons may seem to be sharper and bolder. But even in their boldness they preserve a sort of innocence. Even when he mocks, Le Sage is never really aggressive; he has no desire to make anybody exult. He laughs for laughter's sake, to show nature laid bare; he never laughs at the present for the sake of an idea or a future system. He knows that humanity, on changing its condition, will change only the form of its folly. In this respect he differs radically from the eighteenth century, and attaches himself to the race of good old mockers of the olden time. This third volume abounds in excellent stories. Gil Blas, become secretary and favourite of the Archbishop of Granada, ruins his chances here, as he had ruined them with the old amorous beau, by telling the truth. All those scenes with the Archbishop are admirable in their naturalness, and breathe a pleasant comedy insensibly mixed with all the actions of life. This good old man's vanity in his authorship is painted in all its relief and all its sanctimonious naïveté, and with a remnant of mansuetude. The scenes with the actress Laura which follow immediately after, are incomparable for truth. Le Sage had a thorough knowledge of the race of actors. When Laura passes him off as her brother and introduces him on that footing to the whole company, the respect with which he is received by all, from the leading mummer to the prompter, the curiosity and civility with which he is regarded, very closely touch one of the most acutely felt pretensions of that world of players of former days: 'It seemed, he says, as if all these people had been foundlings who had never seen a brother'. The fact is that the actors (I am still speaking of those of former days), precisely because they were most often poorly provided in respect of family, were the more proud and attentive when they were able to show a few members as specimens.

When he comes to Court, and becomes secretary and favourite of the Duke of Lerma, we believe for a moment

that Gil Blas is about to rise and become a gentleman in some respects ; but no, he has to do with dangers of another kind, and he succumbs. We have only removed to another floor, but the furniture, the interests, the passions of the side-wings are still the same. Far from improving, at this moment of intoxication, he sinks to a lower degree of fault than he had yet reached, to unfeelingness of heart, to disregard of his family and first friends. The highest point of his prosperity is just the moment when, if he is not on his guard, his real depravity will begin. It takes disgrace to make him come to himself, and to return to the truth of his habit and nature.

The fourth volume of *Gil Blas* did not appear till 1735, that is to say, twenty years after the two first, and eleven years after the third. In connexion with these long intervals, we read in a journal kept by a newsmonger of the time, the following note, which gives us a correct idea of the tone adopted by contemporaries on Le Sage :

‘ Le Sage, the author of *Gil Blas*, has just published (January, 1733) the Life of M. de Beauchêne, Captain of freebooters. This book cannot be badly written, being by Le Sage ; but it is easy to perceive from the themes that this author has been for some time treating, that he only works for his living, and that he is consequently not his own master, to devote time and industry to his works. It is six or seven years since the Ribou (widow of the bookseller) advanced him a hundred pistols on the fourth volume of his *Gil Blas* which is not yet finished and will not be for some time to come ’.

This fourth volume, in which we see Gil Blas issuing from his retirement and haven of rest to battle again for some time at Court, does not present the same vicissitudes and the same rapid succession of adventures as the preceding volumes, but does not fall behind them. In it we find a brief statement of the author’s literary tastes, when he shows us his protagonist in the library of his château of Lirias (a castle *in Spain*), taking a pleasure above all in books of a cheerful morality, and choosing as his favourite authors Horace, Lucian, Erasmus.

Le Sage’s literary theory might be extracted in its completeness from more than one passage of *Gil Blas*, and particularly from the latter’s conversations with his friend the poet Fabrice Nunez. Fabrice, in order to succeed, had consulted the taste of the day ; he followed the style

of Gongora, with its affected, entangled expressions, the romanticism of the period. Gil Blas reproves him for it, and insists on clearness before everything; even a sonnet, he thinks, should be perfectly intelligible. His friend rallies him on his simplicity and expounds the modern theory to him: 'If this sonnet is hardly intelligible, so much the better, my friend. For sonnets, odes and the other poems which aim at the sublime, the simple and the natural are not adapted; all their merit lies in obscurity; it is enough if the poet thinks he understands himself. . . . There are five or six of us, bold innovators who have undertaken to change the language from white to black; and we shall succeed, if it please God, in spite of Lope de Vega, Cervantes . . .' You must know that in writing these things, Le Sage had in his eye Fontenelle, perhaps Montesquieu, certainly Voltaire, whom he considered too studied, as if trying to improve upon the language of Racine, Corneille, and his illustrious forerunners.

Boileau, we have seen, had not exactly smiled on Le Sage's début. Le Sage in his turn appears to have shown little favour to what they call the grand and high literature of his time, which he thought stilted. This difference of opinion, carried to the point of aversion, is marked in all the acts of his literary life. He soon breaks with the Comédie Française, he quarrels with it, with the King's players who perform in the grand style, with tragic declamation. He devotes himself to the little theatres, the theatres of the Fairs, and alone or in partnership with others he composes at least a hundred little plays which pretty well represent in the germ, or even already in completion, what are to-day called vaudevilles, comic operas, the plays acted at the *Variétés* and in the Boulevard theatres. Le Sage was something of a Désaugiers.

He does not wish to enter the French Academy; he resists his friend Danchet, who wants to draw him into it, and he refuses absolutely to canvass for votes, which was then *de rigueur*.

He has an aversion for the *bureaux d'esprit* (offices of wit), such as the salon of the Marquise de Lambert was in his day, and, without mentioning his deafness which greatly troubles him, he has his reasons for that: 'There they look upon the best comedy or the merriest and

cleverest novel, he remarks (not without a little glance at himself) as a feeble production which merits no praise ; the least little *serious* work, on the other hand, an ode, an eclogue, a sonnet, passes for the greatest effort of the human intellect'. He is severe upon the makers of odes and tragedies, upon all the official and solemn kinds, those *titled* kinds that the public respects and honours on the strength of the label, unable to see that there is often infinitely more wit and talent expended elsewhere. The authors of tragedies and odes paid him back in kind ; Jean-Baptiste Rousseau overstepped all bounds when he wrote to Brossette : 'The author of the *Diable boiteux* could not do better than associate himself with mountebanks ; his genius is in its veritable sphere. Gilles and Fagotin will have a good master in him : *Apollo* had a very bad pupil'. Voltaire had too much wit not to praise *Gil Blas*, but he did so as little as he possibly could, and he mixed with his eulogy an imputation of plagiarism, which was contrary to facts and quite ill-natured. Judging by the few words which he reluctantly drops with regard to *Gil Blas*, Voltaire seems to have no idea that it will be infinitely more glorious soon to have written that novel than his poem *La Henriade*.

Le Sage was a practical philosopher ; at an early age he was more ready to follow his own inclination and to obey his tastes than to put a constraint upon himself. A man of genius, but of independent character, he was able, in order to be more free, to renounce a part of that *consideration* which it would have been so easy for him to gain. 'In this world one is worth only what one wishes to be worth,' La Bruyère has said. Le Sage knew it ; but, in order to appear to all as he was, he never consented to pose before them. He had too much contempt for all the things that people try to make each other believe in the world. In his hatred of the solemn and the false, he would rather have cast himself on the side of the common and the vulgar. He preferred the coffee-houses to the drawing-rooms. *Plebeius moriar senex* ! he seemed to have applied to himself this word of an ancient writer : May I return in my old age to the obscure ranks out of which I rose for a moment ! He plunged with pleasure back into the crowd, finding there an ever-fresh matter for his observation. He worked for the Fair, and sowed his

salt in handfuls upon the planks ; he had a hundred successes not reputed very honourable. I have just read his *Foire des Fées*, his *Monde renversé*, really very pretty farces. This vein and this vogue of Le Sage the *vaudevilliste* would deserve a separate study ; for, it must be remarked, it was not solely his need to make a living that threw him in that direction. It was also attraction and vocation. He did not think it very derogatory to put words into the mouth of Harlequin ; he passed for a moment even from Harlequin to the marionette stage. Harlequin, marionettes, taking one actor with another, he thought that it all amounted to the same thing, and that he was still pulling the same strings.

If that is practical wisdom, one cannot help admitting that talent always loses a little in not having a very high ideal in view. The result of this disadvantage showed itself in Le Sage : after having reached the perfect point of observation in the *Diable boiteux* and *Gil Blas*, the height of comedy in *Crispin* and *Turcaret*, he slackened, he repeated himself, he degenerated a little, and went so far as to publish in the end things like *La Valise trouvée* and *Le Mélange amusant*, which are indeed the bottom of the sack and the valise.

Just imagine Molière without Boileau at his side to urge him on, to scold him, to counsel him to write high comedy and the *Misanthrope* ; Molière writing an endless number of *Georges Dandin*s, *Scapins* and *Pourceaugnacs* of ever diminishing quality. That is the misfortune which Le Sage had to suffer, for he is a kind of mitigated Molière. He had no Aristarchus at his side, and he gave in unreservedly to his natural inclination, and to the imperious need of making a living.

A man of intellect who belongs as little as it is possible to the family of Le Sage, and who said, with a smile, that he was a greater Platonist than Plato, M. Joubert, was thinking of this want of an ideal in our author, when he let fall this severe judgment : ' We may say of Le Sage's novels that they appear to have been written in a café, by a player of dominoes, after leaving the Comédie '. But here we are touching upon some antipathies which distinctly divide two races of minds : those who prefer the natural to everything, even the distinguished, and those who prefer the delicate to all, even the natural.

Le Sage was sixty-seven years of age when the last volume of *Gil Blas* appeared. Three years after (1738), he gave *Le Bachelier de Salamanque*, of which, as the fruit of his old age, he was said to be very fond. In the composition of this *Bachelier* he followed his ordinary method. While he gave it out as taken from a Spanish manuscript, he introduced French manners, those of our little Abbés, a class unknown in Spain ; and at the same time, the description of Mexican manners which we find in the second part of the *Bachelier* he took, without acknowledgment, from the account of an Irishman, Thomas Gage, which had been translated into French many years before. But all these borrowings, this patchwork, and the things of his own invention, were blended and united as ever in the COMIC of a flowing and amusing narrative ?

Another work of his, and certainly not one of the least good, was the actor Montménéil, his son, an excellent player and declared inimitable by those who saw him. Montménéil, who for a time had been in the Church, but had been unable to resist his vocation, played admirably the parts of the Avocat Patelin, Turcaret ; he also played the Marquis in *Turcaret*, the valet La Branche in *Crispin*, and generally excelled in all the rôles of valets and peasants. We may say that he acted as his father wrote and narrated. Montménéil only translated into another form the same comic stock of subjects, the same family talent. It was some time before Le Sage forgave his son for having turned actor, and especially for playing at the Comédie Française, with which he was at perpetual warfare on account of his Fair drama. But one day some friends dragged him to a performance of *Turcaret* ; he saw his son, doubly recognized his property and his work, wept with joy and became a father again ; so much so, that Montménéil's death, which occurred suddenly in 1743, was the chief affliction of his old age.

' Le Sage having lost Montménéil, too old to work, too proud to beg, and too honest to borrow, retired with his wife and daughter to Boulogne-sur-Mer, where his son the canon lived. He came almost every day to dine at my house and amused me extremely '. It is the Abbé Voisenon who is speaking ; Voisenon was then Grand-Vicar to the Bishop of Boulogne. This canon, Le Sage's son, in whose house his old father ended his days, was himself a

gay liver : ' he imperturbably knew his whole Fair drama and could sing it still better than the *Preface* '. A priest of the same calibre as the Abbé Voisenon, he would have made an excellent comedian. Le Sage had still a third son, who became an actor and toured Germany under the name of *Pittenece* : but this latter resembled his father's inferior works. Le Sage was deaf, as he already had been at the age of forty. This deafness, which increased with his years, must have helped to estrange him from the circles of the great world, but had not in any degree impaired his natural cheerfulness. In conversation he was obliged to use an ear-trumpet ; he called it his *benefactor*, as it assisted him in communicating with men of wit, and he had merely to put it down so as not to hear the talk of fools and bores.¹ Towards the end of his life he did not have the full use of his faculties until towards the middle of the day, and people remarked that his mind rose and set every day with the sun. He died at Boulogne, on November 17, 1747, in his eightieth year. The Comte de Tressan, then Commander of the province, thought it his duty to follow the funeral with his staff. Death soon restored Le Sage to his proper rank, and he who had been of no account in his lifetime, of whom no one ever spoke without mixing a little pity and regret with his praise, is now classed without an effort in the memory of men, in the following of Lucian and Terence, beside Fielding and Goldsmith, below Cervantes and Molière.

NOTE.

In an article in *Le Temps* (December 29, 1835) M. Depping published some new particulars on Le Sage, by an English writer, Joseph Spence, who went to see him during a visit to France. I quote the passage :

' His house is at Paris, in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, and so, open to the country air : the garden laid out in the prettiest manner that ever I saw, for a town garden. It was as pretty as it was small, and when he was in the study-part of it, he was quite retired from the noise of the street, or any interruption from his own family. The garden was only of the breadth of the house, from which you stepped out into a raised square

¹ His almost complete deafness had by no means prevented him following, for years, the performance of his own plays : he missed hardly any part of them, saying even that he was a much better judge of acting and effect after he had ceased to hear the players. (Diderot, *Letter on Deaf-mutes*).

parterre, planted with a variety of the choicest flowers. From this you went down, by a flight of steps on each side, into a *Berceau*, which led to two rooms or summer-houses quite at the end of the garden. These were joined by an open portico, the roof of which was supported with columns; so that he could walk from the one to the other all under cover, in the intervals of writing. The berceaux were covered with vines and honey-suckles, and the space between them was grove-work. It was in the right-hand room as you go down that he wrote *Gil Blas*, or at least a part of it, for it is doubtful whether Le Sage occupied the same house for thirty years. Unless the imagination of the English author has embellished the place, Le Sage had found in his faubourg the hermitage of the poet and philosopher. The little house in the upper town of Boulogne, where he spent his last days, which I have so often looked at in my childhood, was certainly less pretty and cheerful. Here is a saying of his quoted by Spence, which agrees with the philosophy of *Gil Blas*: 'Somebody had been describing the perpetual complaints of the people of England, in spite of all their privileges and enjoyments.—"Surely (said Le Sage), the people of England are the most unhappy people on the face of the earth—with liberty, property, and three meals a day"' (*Anecdotes, Observations and Characters of Books and Men*, by the Rev. Joseph Spence, 1820).

M. DE BROGLIE

Monday, August 12, 1850.

I AM not going to discuss politics ; I only intend to apply to a few new subjects the same method of analysis that I employ with authors and literary personages. The political Assemblies hold too great a place in our social system, and exercise too great an influence in it, to be omitted in a somewhat varied and complete study of the men of this time. They contain in their midst the most illustrious of them, they develop them, they show them up under fresh aspects ; they often modify and always manifest them. In a word, one never gains a better knowledge of a mind, a talent, a character or a vanity, than when one has seen it for some time at that game.

In entering upon this kind of sketch, however, I was desirous of beginning with a subject that was entirely safe, and to take up some one who should leave hardly any room for diversity of judgments. However much or little one may like his opinions or his person, M. de Broglie is a man who enjoys universal respect. That rare thing, *respect*, which M. Royer-Collard declared to be almost undiscoverable in our days, and that he enjoyed so fully himself, M. de Broglie has likewise succeeded in gaining and keeping ; he is surrounded by it. He has rescued it as it were from the political storms of active life, in spite of the most violent conflicts that have brought a Statesman into apparent contradiction with his own past, so imbued are all, even his adversaries, with the sense of his uprightness, his lofty disinterestedness and his perfect sincerity as a man of honour !

But, at the same time, M. de Broglie is one of the most original minds of our epoch, one of the most curious and the most complicated in their formation and mode of think-

ing. I would like to try to analyse him here, and make him understood.

Victor, Duc de Broglie, the man we are speaking of, born in November, 1785, grandson of the Maréchal de Broglie, comes of a quite war-like race, in which we might distinguish men of intellect, some of whom made a name in Diplomacy or in the Church ; but we should discover among them neither a philosopher nor a writer properly speaking. He is the first of his race who has made his mark in the order of thought. His father, the Prince de Broglie, eldest son of the Maréchal, entered service young ; he went through the American war with zeal and gaiety, like all those young nobles of the time, the Lameths, the Ségurs, the Lauzuns ; like them too, he fully entered into the ideas of the eighteenth century. He left a *Relation* of his travels in America, some parts of which are in print : it is a lively, amusing and witty narrative, quite in the spirit of the times, in the French and light style. The fair sex take up a good deal of space ; the tone of banter conceals some serious observations. Washington is very well observed and exhibited in a judicious portrait. The nuns of Tercère, the Spanish ladies of Caxacas, are regarded with not less favour. The Prince de Broglie was indeed of that race of amiable Frenchmen who went about the two worlds scattering sallies, pretty speeches and ideas—ideas, observe it well, as well as the rest. For example, in a little town of New Spain he meets a certain M. Prudhomme (the name is rather singular for a Spaniard), who is both a king's lieutenant and a physician ; besides, an advanced philosopher and very curious to read a history of the Revolution of the English Colonies and some volumes of the Abbé Raynal. The Prince de Broglie does not fail, at the first opportunity, to send him the two works, ' by means of which, he adds gaily, I hope, if the Spanish Colonies revolt against their sovereign during my life-time, to be able to boast of having contributed towards it '.

As a member of the Constituent Assembly he followed the Revolution from some distance and served it as long as it remained within the paths and limits of the first Constitution. It is rather interesting to note that at one time the Maréchal de Broglie was Commander-in-chief of the Royal troops assembled around Versailles in order to intimidate the Assembly, whilst his son was helping on the

movement in that same Assembly. The latter always refused to emigrate, even after August 10. He died on the scaffold, at the age of thirty-four. Before dying he sent for his young son, the present Duc de Broglie, who was only eight years of age, and charged him never on any account to desert the cause of freedom.

The boy was brought up under the care of his mother (*née* de Rosen), who was married a second time to M. d'Argenson, so well known under the Restoration by reason of the clearness and the radical precision of his liberalism.¹ He had a governor and attended the courses at the Central Schools; but above all he afterwards industriously revised and extended his studies on his own account and fortified them in all directions by work and reflection. M. de Broglie is one of the men of the time who study most and to the best advantage. Remember that the majority of the men of these days who are launched upon the world and affairs *do not read*, that is to say that they read only what is indispensable and necessary to them, but no more. When these men have wit and taste, and some literary pretensions, they have a very simple expedient, they pretend to have read. They speak of things and books as if they were acquainted with them. They divine, they keep their ears open, they choose and find their way in the things they hear in conversation. They give their opinion and end by having one, and by believing that it is founded on reason. M. de Broglie is the last man to act in this light-hearted manner: studious, regular in his habits, every morning at the same hour he sits down to his work, to his study, to his reading. Gifted with a great capacity for work and a capacious memory, possessing the ancient languages and most of the modern, he reads authors and books from beginning to end; he gains instruction from them and checks them at the same time; he is impartial even to those that he is severe upon. His judgment takes account of everything, and finally sums up in a form both complex and ingenious. In a word, if he were not a Statesman, I should venture to say that he has in him all the qualifications for an excellent and conscientious critic on every matter.

¹ On the relations between M. de Broglie and M. d'Argenson, one might read a *Notice sur la Vie de Vover d'Argenson* (Paris, 1845) and two articles inserted in the journal *Le Progrès de la Vienne* (March 2 and 5, 1845).

Under the Empire he was never dazzled nor led astray. The Emperor would no doubt have liked well enough to have a de Broglie in his armies, to be able to mention this historical name in his bulletins, and it is possible that he intimated as much to him; but M. de Broglie was from the first one of those men whose ears are closed to seduction, one of those men who follow out their own idea and do not let themselves be turned aside from their inner vocation. We may say that from that time *he thought straight before him*. About 1809 he entered the Council of State as auditor, and soon, like most of the young auditors, he became an intendant and administrator in conquered countries, in Hungary, in Croatia, in the Illyrian Provinces. He spent some time in Spain, at Valladolid, as Secretary-general to the French administration. In 1812 he was attaché to the Embassy at Warsaw, then at Vienna; he accompanied M. de Narbonne as Secretary to the Embassy to the Congress of Prague. In the divers opportunities he had of approaching the master and of hearing him, either in the Council of State or elsewhere, he was struck by his faults more than by his qualities; he saw and remarked above all the outbursts, the errors, the acts of rudeness of that declining greatness, without sufficiently perceiving the flashes of genius and great good sense which shone forth and manifested themselves; that was a piece of prejudice on his part which he now acknowledges himself. For every mind in course of formation there is a government and a climate which suit it: evidently the Empire was not the most favourable and most propitious climate for the moral and somewhat ideological turn of mind of the young Victor de Broglie.

The Restoration created him a peer from the outset, in 1814; he was not yet thirty years of age. He had only just attained the requisite age for the vote four or five days before the Chamber of Peers had to pronounce judgment on Marshal Ney (December 5, 1815). He made immediate use of his right to give the most favourable, and certainly the most merciful vote that was recorded in the secret Committee on that memorable night. On the question that was put in these terms: 'Has the Marshal conspired against the safety of the State?' 157 out of 161 votes were affirmative; three members protested and abstained from voting; a *single* vote was negative and

declared that there had been no act of conspiracy : it was given by the Duc de Broglie. When once the guilt was admitted, he voted for the mildest punishment, which was banishment.

Independently of the quite particular interest attaching to the glorious name of Ney and the question of humanity itself, there was in this vote something else besides, there was a theory. From that time M. de Broglie had ideas on the nature of political crimes, and on the application of the death penalty in general, which he has had occasion to indicate since in more than one work under the Restoration, and which were similar to those of several philanthropic theorists at the beginning of the century.

The marriage of the Duc de Broglie with the daughter of Mme. de Staël in 1816, marks a second period of his intellectual life. In his first ideas on liberalism he was perhaps more absolute, more radical, than we have seen him since ; or at least he was liberal by virtue of simpler ideas, more directly deduced, more nearly related to those of Bentham, and differed little from the positive school of MM. Comte and Dunoyer. The new society, the family into which he entered, found him singularly disposed to raise his liberalism a peg higher, if I may say so, to discover in it never, more refined, more distinguished reasons, more in agreement with the moral idea they formed of human nature. Here we touch upon one of the principal features which characterize M. de Broglie's mind, and the *doctrinaire* mind in general, taking this word in its real primitive sense. I have said that M. de Broglie is one of the most original minds of this time ; he is so above all in the form, in the method and the means of demonstration that he employs ; even when he thinks like all the world, when he arrives at the same conclusions, he comes by them or confirms himself in them by reasons which are his own ; on every subject he has his reasons, true perhaps, sometimes subtle, always ingenious reasons, which are never those of the common run of men : there we might see the stamp of his aristocracy, if we wanted to seek any traces of it in him.

He began with liberalism pure and simple ; that was his first and direct inspiration. Whatever he may do and whatever he may have been seen to do, M. de Broglie is instinctively and fundamentally liberal. For some years

he has no doubt exercised much moderation and restraint in his liberalism ; but, even before the Revolution of July, 1830, he continually strove with noble ingenuity to perfect his liberalism. No man has made more use than he of reflection and dialectics to react upon himself and his idea, to raise his first liberal doctrine to a higher power, to crown it with a religious idea which would render it holy, to find a more worthy and more intimate foundation for it in man's heart than that of common utility and well-understood interest. All his speeches, all his writings under the Restoration might be quoted in support of this manner of explaining the so distinguished and so eminent, so ingenious and so complex mind, that we regret to have to study too rapidly.

His first speeches, his opinions expressed in the Chamber of Peers, belong unreservedly to the left shade. He was opposed to the so-called *Law of Amnesty* (January, 1816), which was rather a law of proscription and banishment. In the discussions on individual liberty, on the freedom of the press, from 1816 to 1820, he always urged the most liberal solutions. To these discussions he brought a wide knowledge of the matter, the science of history, lucid comparisons with English legislation, which he knew thoroughly and in its smallest details, a truly *legislative* mind, which is not satisfied with general views, but delights in entering into the enacting part of the laws, in examining their mechanism, and which if necessary invents new means and in activities. That is again one of M. de Broglie's characteristic features. His mind is naturally turned to the law, to jurisprudence ; whilst he delights in going back to first principles, he excels in following and distinguishing the applications and the consequences, in discussing the different cases and points in question, in looking into the particulars ; he has a taste for law. In respect of the system of civil or penal procedure, as well as in the matter of political economy, he had, in conversation, all sorts of ingenious ideas at the service of his friends who were occupied with those matters, and suggested to them many shrewd ideas on details. In this sense and with respect to things, he prides himself on being a practical man, and he is so certainly. He is less so in presence of men.

At the withdrawal of the Dessoles ministry, M. de Serre,

with whom he was closely intimate, tried to entice him into the cabinet which was being formed under the presidency of M. Decazes. From this moment, I think, one might perceive not indeed a diminution, but a new combination in M. de Broglie's liberalism: from that time he took more account of what is called in political style the governmental element. In June, 1820, he voted for the new system of election which introduced the double vote, though he had previously been in favour of the law of February 5, 1817, which established equal and simple election. He did not vote without great reserve, without addressing the Government with words full of severity and emotion on the subject of the June troubles. But, after all, he began, though reluctantly and against his inclination, to allow for circumstances even in a question of principles.

The acts and tendencies of the Villèle ministry soon again put him at his ease, and he was able to give himself up without scruple to a methodic and vigorous opposition, which arose then from his convictions and his instincts as well as from his reasonings. Amongst his speeches of that period, there are two which one cannot help remarking for the vivacity and energy of their expression, which rises here even to passion and eloquence. The first of these speeches is that which he delivered on the subject of the Spanish War (March 14, 1832). After disentangling the question from the ambiguities and quibbles in which several speakers had involved it, he came to the substance, he went to the bottom of it, and, accepting the challenge in its whole extent, he opposed doctrine against doctrine; to that of the Holy Alliance, which puts the right entirely on the side of Royalty, he opposed that which puts it on the side of justice always, and often on the side of the peoples:

‘What! he exclaimed (and I ask permission to quote at length one of the grandest and finest pages of our parliamentary eloquence under the Restoration), what! is the power of giving political institutions to nations, of destroying or refusing them, to reside exclusively and perpetually with kings? Is a king to be free, at all times, and by his mere will, to abolish the public right of his country, to substitute another, or to substitute none, for it? The King of Spain, returning to his States after five years of exile, seizes absolute power and brings under the most humiliating yoke the people that

delivered Europe; he does well; no voice, among the sovereigns is raised to oppose his action; nay, from all hands he receives felicitations and eulogies! This power perishes in his hands, by his own fault; there arises immediately a great clamour; all Europe must arm to restore it to him in its purity and plenitude. . . . In spite of the use that his counsellors may make of it, whatever excesses they may resort to, however great the follies and acts of violence that they may be guilty of, they are to be responsible to God alone; and if the Spanish nation, ruined, persecuted, reduced to extremes, driven to despair, rises up at last and without any offence against the King's person or his hereditary rights, calls for and sanctions a new state of things, that nation is to be treated as a crowd of bandits that requires chastising and muzzling afresh. Has the right of resistance to tyranny disappeared from the face of the earth?

'Gentlemen, it is with deep regret that I utter these words. I know that I am walking upon burning coals.

'I know as well as any man besides, that this delicate and terrible right, that slumbers at the foot of all human institutions, as their last and sad security, should not be lightly invoked. I know as well as any man that, especially at the end of great public disturbances, prudence counsels us not to be continually dinning it into the ears of the people, and to leave it buried under a veil that necessity alone has the right to lift. I for my part am prepared to conform to the counsels of prudence; I am prepared to hold my tongue; but on condition that I am not to be forced to declare the non-existence of such a right; on condition that I am not to be forced to approve by my words, to tolerate by my silence, to seal with the blood of my fellow-citizens, maxims of pure slavery. For, after all, that right of counting upon oneself, of measuring one's obedience by the rule of justice, law and reason; that right of living and being worthy to live, is the patrimony of every one of us; it is the apanage of man as he has come free and intelligent from the hands of his Creator. It is because it exists, imprescriptibly, inexpugnably, within each of us, because it exists collectively in societies; the honour of our kind depends upon it. The noblest memories of the human race are bound up with those glorious epochs when nations who civilized the world and did not rest satisfied with dwelling on this earth in self-ignorance, and as inert tools in the hands of Providence, broke their fetters, proved their moral greatness, and left to their posterity magnificent examples of liberty and virtue. The noblest pages of history are devoted to celebrating those generous citizens who have freed their country. And when, from the lofty heights to which this thought carries us, we cast our eyes upon the present state of Europe, when we remember that it is these same Cabinets that we have seen

for thirty years fawning upon all the Governments born of our Revolution, that successively treated with the Convention, sought the friendship of the Directory, solicited alliance with the Devastator of the world; when we remember that it is those same Ministers whom we saw so zealous at the Erfurt Conferences who now come and gravely, with their supreme learning and full authority, stigmatize with insulting names the cause for which Hampden died on the field of honour and Lord Russell on the scaffold, truly the blood rises to one's face; one is tempted to ask oneself: Who are they after all, those who, with a stroke of the pen, intend to destroy our old admirations, the things we were taught in our youth, and even our notions of the beautiful and the just? By what right would they dare to say to us, as the pontiff of the Most High said to the Sicambrian who first sat on the throne of the Gauls, *Burn what thou hast worshipped, worship what thou hast burned!*

In quoting these eloquent and generous words, far from me the thought of showing a noble mind in contradiction with itself in respect of what he said then and what he must have done since! But I must follow him rapidly in his progress, and I point out what appears to me most salient.

But if you wish it absolutely, compare this noble speech with other more recent speeches of the same honest politician, which are neither less sincere, nor less animated by an accent of truth, and you will have before your eyes in epitome the whole lesson of experience, the eternal lesson that is ever beginning over again.

The second speech, which it is impossible not to mention, is that which he delivered on April 4, 1826, on the bill relating to the right of primogeniture. The subject is here treated from every point of view. As one of the last who entered upon this memorable discussion, M. de Broglie in his turn leaves some luminous tracks. He makes it very evident that there are things which can be remade *neither now nor when too late*; that one cannot change the manners and habits of a nation with the help of three or four clauses of a law. Among all the serious and elevated portions of this speech I observe an example of one of the qualities and forms of M. de Broglie's mind, raillery and irony. The member who was responsible for the bill (the Marquis de Maleville) had hit upon the argument, to support his case, that by putting an end to equal division among children, this law would force the

disinherited to bestir themselves, to become active, intelligent, industrious ; he pointed to the example of England. M. de Broglie showed up the ingenuousness of this argument, which was quite flattering to younger brothers : ' This argument, he said, is the Mover's very own, it is right to acknowledge it ; for, even in a discussion on the right of primogeniture, Heaven forbid that we should not give everybody his due ! ' And attacking the argument itself : ' Wonderful reflection ! ' he observed. From that point of view, as we cannot have too many active and intelligent people, why not disinherit also the first-born ? After all, it is not an absolutely new argument. The celebrated Johnson used to employ it in the last century, and he put it in this way : ' The law of primogeniture, he used to say, has this advantage, that at least it produces only one fool in a family ' . But we might find similar examples of prolonged irony, with a tone of lofty disdain, especially in the speeches delivered by M. de Broglie when he was in power after 1830, and above all in the struggles of 1835.

Leaving aside, however, those few occasions when he became warm, the kind of eloquence peculiar to M. de Broglie is generally that which Cicero had in his mind, when he said : ' One should express oneself with less display of rhetoric in the deliberations of the Senate, for one is speaking before an assembly of wise men ' . His eloquence was indeed of a nature to suit in every respect the old Chamber of Peers, M. de Broglie is a debater. He enlightens, he instructs, he is elevating rather than moving : even when his feelings are concerned and when questions are under discussion which he has at heart, he addresses himself especially to reason. A really extemporaneous speaker, he never gets up unless he has something to say ; he enters into a difficult discussion in order to clear it up, to introduce new ideas, to propose special means of solving the question. He speaks with clearness, logically and connectedly, and, what is more, with elegance, with an elegance which would not be natural in any other, which in him does not appear affected, and which is the precise form of his thought. A methodical mind, his extemporization itself bears the stamp of method and shows no trace of indifference or negligence. Gifted, as I have said, with a great facility which has been increased

by study, and with a capacious memory, he needs very little preparation to give to his improvised speech all the appearance of a thought-out discourse; the difference is not seen. His thought rises up within him already drawn up in good order, in that rare, learned and rather unexpected form, which is quite his own.

The last years of the Restoration were a fine and happy moment for M. de Broglie. A sincere and devoted friend of constitutional government, aspiring to see it really in force in our country, he did not despair of seeing that result brought about in a regular manner and without a revolution. The harmony of public opinion was reassuring at that time: the flower of the young generation seemed every day to bring to what was called *the good cause* a strength that was not devoid of prudence. During these years (1828-1829) M. de Broglie cherished a dream which was truly that of a good man, of an enlightened philosopher who believes in God, in ideal and supreme truth, in truth and order in this world, in the perfectibility of the human mind, in the wisdom and progress of his own epoch, in the gradual and well-directed triumph of reason in all branches of society and knowledge, in the totality of civilization itself: 'With all deference to the officious detractors of our time and our country, he wrote in 1828, all goes well, every day sane ideas are gaining ground; the public intelligence is forming and spreading visibly'. In this case it was merely a question of a petition concerning the judge-auditors; but we are sensible of the generous satisfaction overflowing the heart of a good man. The various articles with which M. de Broglie at this time supplied the *Revue Française*, and which are of the highest merit, are all inspired or dominated by a feeling of that nature, whether, in reviewing M. Lucas' book on the penal system and on the death penalty in particular, he is trying to fix within its limits and to trace to its origin the right of society to punish, inquiring into the reasons why human life should be respected even in criminals, and concerning himself about the means of regenerating even those who are being punished; whether, while refuting the brutally materialistic theory of Broussais, he is pleased to re-establish the, according to him, authentic and irrefragable claims of spirituality and the energy of the soul; or whether, apropos of M. de Vigny's *Othello* and the question of the

Dramatic Art in France, he is rejoicing in the disposition of the public and, in that direction too, showing his faith in a certain general good sense that seems ripe for the true and the beautiful. Everywhere and always he inclines to the best hopes. And in literature, for example, with respect to the strife between the two schools on the stage :

'Well! he exclaimed, alluding to the classical idolatries which he did not wish to see replaced by other idolatries, well! the time for these exaggerations is already past for the French; we venture to predict that, in the general good sense which has been evolved and prepared by the discussions and controversies of the last fifteen or twenty years, there is an invincible obstacle against those individual adorations ever gaining ground, and becoming the common opinions and received doctrines. We have been saved from one extreme; we will not be thrown into the opposite extreme; we have been delivered from thousands of little prejudices; we will not be swaddled in prejudices of another kind'.

What he says here on one point of the question, he said or thought on the other points; he thought that the dramatic art was in a good way. Addressing the friends of the classic and those of the romantic drama, he set forth with great good sense and a lofty impartiality the antagonism and the legitimate competition between the two kinds; he presented, so to say, their Charter, alas! a Charter as vain and as quickly destroyed as the other.

How far from these noble and animated dissertations, and from the encouraging prospects they opened out, to the too faithful and hideous picture which, five years later, the same man, as head of the Government, drew, on the morrow of L'iesclii's attempt, when, forcing back the feelings of a too prolonged philanthropy, and calling upon the Chambers to pass vigorous repressive laws, he said :

'And our stage, Gentlemen! . . . What is our stage now in France? Who dares to enter the theatre, when he does not know the play except by name? Our stage has become not only the striking testimony of all the profligacy and all the insanity to which the human mind can yield itself when left without any check, but it is become besides a school of dissoluteness, a school of crimes, and a school which turns out pupils that we see afterwards on the prisoner's bench at the Courts of Assizes testifying by their language, after proving by their actions, both the profound degradation of their intelligence and the profound depravity of their souls'.

Be that as it may, M. de Broglie's articles in the *Revue Française*, especially the three I have indicated, that on M. Lucas' book, on M. Broussais, and on de Vigny's translation of *Othello*, are a credit to the literary criticism of the last years of the Restoration. These articles are treatises; they are almost as long. We recognize in them a serious, elevated, methodic mind, precise and clear in its deductions, sometimes delighting in details, and not without charm. The author gives himself out as a mere amateur and as a spectator in the pit, and he is a master. I will only venture upon a single criticism with regard to the manner in which these articles are conceived and composed. They are well written, they are ingenious, they are deep, but they are rather compact; they want the light of day, a few open spaces here and there. 'Before using a fine expression, make room for it', an excellent critic has said. I find many a fine expression, many a fine thought in M. de Broglie, but one has not always room and space to look at them. One is too sensible of the serious spirit which is entirely devoted to the matter itself, and which writes only in presence of its subject, without giving sufficient attention to the effect it makes upon his readers. Once again, it is not that it lacks a certain ingenious charm, but this charm vanishes a little in the continuity of the application and the research.

Thus, in the remarkable article on *Othello* and the Dramatic Art, there are several chapters as it were that are presented quite of a piece, which are not sufficiently detached and divided up. When one comes to the end of this so instructive and, on the whole, so pleasing work, the author can hardly refrain from beginning over again, so many new questions offer themselves for solution. There is no well-managed pause, no rest. If it were not for that fault, it would be perfectly literary. But the literary bounds, if I may say so, are a little overstepped. And in general, whatever subject the author may be treating, he traces back the origins, the causes; he delights in it; he takes everything up at its beginnings, and follows it to its last conclusion without missing a single link of the chain. He does not take sufficient account of French buoyancy, that light-heartedness which his father and all the eighteenth century knew so well, and that the nineteenth has not yet altogether forgotten.

To these pieces of criticism, which may be said to be of the first order and worthy of high esteem, we must add the Eulogy of the learned orientalist M. de Sacy, delivered by the Duc de Broglie in the Chamber of Peers on April 27, 1840, a very fine Eulogy, very serious, religious in tone, soberly ornate, and in every respect in harmony with its subject.

The July Revolution at once carried M. de Broglie to the Ministry. But in the first Cabinet (August 11, 1830) he only had the portfolio of Public Instruction, and only held it for a few months. It was two years before he was invited to take a leading part. Casimir Périer was dead; it was a question of continuing him with greater breadth and with stability. The Ministry of October 11 (1832) was formed. This Ministry was in a certain sense a collective Périer Ministry, more intellectual, equally energetic; it gathered into a bundle the most able of men not yet disunited, M. Guizot, M. Thiers. M. de Broglie had the Foreign Affairs; the despatches, published to-day, show that considering the circumstances of the time, and the terms in which the problem was stated, he did not carry them on without firmness or a correct sense of the dignity of France. At the same time, the authority attaching to his good faith made his promises more reliable, his pledges more significant; he was one of those whose word, even in diplomacy, is not doubted. His opinion carried much weight in the decision regarding the siege of Antwerp. That was not the only proof of strength that he gave. In the summer of 1833, a conference took place at Munchen-Graetz, in Bohemia, between the sovereigns of Russia, Prussia and Austria, and their chief ministers; the outcome of it was a concert which was threatening enough for us. The powers had signified that, if they thought it their duty to succour their allies (they were thinking especially of Italy) they would do so without taking France's opposition into consideration, and they intimated that an armed intervention on her part would be regarded as a directly hostile action against each one of them. M. de Broglie received this communication which was made to him by the ambassadors of the three Courts, and by each of them in a slightly different tone; the answer to each was perfectly in keeping; in a circular intended for the information of

our foreign agents he said : ' Adopting a stiff and haughty tone in my answer to M. de Hugel (the Austrian *chargé d'affaires*), I showed myself friendly and amicable towards Prussia, and a little scornful to the cabinet of Saint-Petersburg '. It has sometimes been made a reproach to M. de Broglie that in similar transactions his manners and formalities lacked flexibility ; but in this case it will be admitted that his customary manners were not out of place.¹

Having suffered a check on the question of the indemnities claimed by the United States of America, M. de Broglie thought right to withdraw from the Cabinet in April, 1834 ; but he re-entered it in March, 1835, his chief colleagues still forming part of it, and besides the portfolio for Foreign Affairs he now took over the Presidency of the Council. It was he who, after Fieschi's attempted assassination, proposed in the Chambers, in the sitting of Tuesday, August 4, the so-called *September Laws*, the object of which was to force all parties to recognize the Charter, and to prevent the principle of it being every day called into question. All governments having had their September Laws, and as the men who opposed them on that day have since then, in their turn, proposed theirs under the stress of necessity, it is easier to-day to form a correct and impartial judgment of them. They were laws of rigorous conservation and defence. I confess that I have not reflected much upon the means which were calculated to prolong the life of the last Government ; but I cannot believe that the September Laws were prejudicial to it ; it appears more than probable to me now that they contributed to its duration. In proposing them M. de Broglie evidently did violence to his anterior theories, to his dearest constitutional combinations, to his benevolent views of social and human morality ; but this time, face to face with a monstrous crime, he saw reality laid bare, and, as a man of courage and honour, did not hesitate.

It has been said that on that day his speech betrayed the tone of a *good man in anger* ; and indeed it cannot but have been so. He had reached the day when a man recog-

¹ A series of despatches from M. de Broglie, in which France's line of conduct with regard to Austria in particular was laid down, may be seen in M. d'Haussonville's work (*Histoire de la Politique extérieure du Gouvernement français, 1830-1848*).

nizes, willingly or unwillingly (and though he should try to forget it again next day), that human morality is not what sages and noble minds imagine it to be in the speculations of their leisure studies, on the heights of Cape Sunium or in the gardens of the Academy. That is a bitter day in a man's life when he is constrained to put fact above right, Hobbes above Plato. Whoever has had to do with life at close quarters, whether in the public, or even in the private order, has known that day.

A lofty irony reigns in many passages of the speeches which M. de Broglie delivered on this occasion before the Chamber of Deputies. They betray the man who is so well able to dispense with favour and who scorns popularity. He was pleased to point out that the Ministry of which he was the head, that he himself in particular, willingly accepted all the odium of the proposed laws, and that others would some day reap the easier fruit of those rude days of conflict and labour. 'We shall be made responsible, we shall be attacked, we shall become the *scapegoat of society*; be it so'. He resolutely made up his mind, and in a half-mocking tone, accentuated with scorn, he quickly got the better of doubtful friends or opponents :

'During that time, he said, dangers will disappear; with the danger the remembrance of the danger will pass away, for we live in an epoch when minds are very changeable and impressions very transitory. The hatreds and resentments that we shall have accumulated upon our heads will subsist, for hatreds are long-lived and resentments do not die. As order becomes re-established, the position we occupy will become more and more the object of a noble ambition; in calmer seasons the Chambers will look upon changes of administration as something not so dangerous to public order; men besides are quickly used up, Gentlemen, in the struggles that we are supporting. Do you know what we shall have done? We shall have prepared, hastened the coming of our successors. Be it so; we joyfully accept the omen, we greedily embrace the hope'.

Such words in any other mouth would have raised a smile: one knew that, coming from M. de Broglie, they were no more than true and sincere. He cares almost as little for power as he does for popularity. This double disdain is a rare thing and seems easy to him; here we

might think that pride of heart and a remnant of race pride are confounded in him. A few months later, and the task having been accomplished, M. de Broglie seems to have himself called forth an occasion for withdrawing. M. Humann, the Minister of Finance, in presenting his budget to the Chamber in January, 1836, had abruptly declared, without having consulted his colleagues, that in his opinion the time was come to reduce the interest on stocks. There ensued explanations, questions without number addressed to the Ministry. M. de Broglie, driven into a corner, uttered his famous words : ' We are asked whether it is the intention of the Government to propose the measure ? I answer : No. *Is that clear ?* '

M. de Broglie was of the opinion that he has since expressed at a useful moment to M. Guizot, who has taken too little advantage of it : ' Govern your Ministry and the Chamber, he wrote to him from Coppet in 1844, or let them get out of their difficulties. In either case the chance is a good one, and the best for you would be to leave by the large door '. M. de Broglie had already carried out that piece of advice ; he felt that he was no longer governing either his Ministry or the Chamber ; he had done his task for the time being, and left by the large door : it is the only door that he ever leaves by.

Since then M. de Broglie has withdrawn into what one might call the most honourable retirement, and only at rare moments has he reappeared in political action. A great bereavement that he suffered in 1838 by the death of the Duchesse de Broglie increased his serious and reserved disposition, that power of abstaining, in which religious thoughts have every day had more share. He has, however, held many public offices, that of Government Commissioner for deciding, with Dr. Lushington, the means of suppressing the slave-trade, that of ambassador in England during the last six months of the Monarchy. But the great rôle that he played during the last years of that rule was that of consulting politician, and he was the sponsor of more than one ministry. Every one felt honoured to be shielded and protected by him. Such rôles are in the long run more honorary than efficacious, and a letter from M. de Broglie, published in the *Revue rétrospective* (No. 7), may have shown that those counsels, given in favourable moments, were more sincere than listened to.

The February Revolution must have dealt a last blow at the theories that M. de Broglie cherished ; for after all, if hitherto he had been obliged to sacrifice more than one of his old and first ideas to the preservation of the constitutional monarchy, that monarchy subsisted and lived on. Some portions of the system had been thrown overboard, but the vessel floated and seemed to defy approaching storms. Seeing it suddenly swamp under sail, M. de Broglie must have understood that there is no part of human theory that can be assured against shipwreck, and his mind, which was not made for vulgar scepticism, must have been more than ever turned on high to the eternal port.

He has remained in appearance, moreover, such as we saw him in previous years. His conversation, which at first shows a slight embarrassment, soon becomes agreeable, rich in things happily expressed. A certain irony of expression, without any bitterness however, appears as it were on the surface : that habitual playfulness, which is not prejudicial to seriousness and returns to it when necessary, seems to point to serenity at the back of it.

His particular friends would alone be entitled to say whether, under a somewhat cold reserve and a somewhat uniform exterior, they have not often discovered all the delicacies of the heart.

M. de Broglie was not appointed to the Constituent Assembly, which is quite natural. As soon as ideas were a little cleared up, the electors of the Eure Department (the Château of Broglie is in the Eure) sent their noble compatriot to the Legislative Assembly. He has not yet taken part in the debates, and he must feel at times a little out of his element. But his presence alone is a good sign, a pledge of order and consideration. The other day, after a violent scene during which M. Miot was in the speaker's tribune, and after an exchange of many insults, I saw M. de Broglie enter calm, serene and smiling ; and that reassured me.

JEANNE D'ARC ¹

Monday, August 19, 1850.

THE *Société de l'Histoire de France*, which has not interrupted its labours in spite of the trying times we have had to pass through, has just seen the termination of one of its most important and most national publications, which it had long ago intrusted to the zeal of M. Jules Quicherat. This young and conscientious scholar has collected in five volumes all the positive documents which are able to clear up the history of Jeanne d'Arc, particularly the texts of the two *Trial*s in their whole extent, the *Trial of condemnation*, and the *Trial of rehabilitation*, which took place twenty-five years later. The extracts and analyses hitherto published in various places, and notably in the *Collection of Memoirs* edited by MM. Michaud and Poujoulat, may have whetted the appetites of readers ; but an extract which contains only the beauties and the flower of a subject is one thing, another is the exact and complete reproduction of the Latin texts in all their tenor, and of the *instruments* themselves (as they are called) of a voluminous procedure. We may say that the memory of Jeanne d'Arc was still half buried in the dust of the record office, and that it has only now been rescued from it. The editor has carefully collected, in succession, the testimonies of the historians and chroniclers of the time regarding the Maid, and all the accessory documents that the curious may desire. We now have the last word, in so far as we shall ever have it, on that marvellous apparition. Lastly, to put the stamp on his publication and his rôle as an excellent editor, M. Quicherat has just added a separate volume, a sort of introduction, in which, with much

¹ *Trial of Jeanne d'Arc*, published for the first time by M. J. Quicherat.

modesty but with much precision, he gives us his opinion on the new points which this complete disclosure of the records of the trial brings out and more clearly determines. We will try, in following him here, to imitate his circumspection, and, in a captivating subject where one is every moment on the slippery ground of enthusiasm and legend, to be guided only by the love of truth.

There is something in the destiny of Jeanne d'Arc which makes it appear, even after her death, one of the most singular, and her renown has undergone all sorts of transformations and vicissitudes. To keep within the circle of the literary horizon, how many sudden changes, how many mishaps! Chapelain's *La Pucelle* had nearly turned the heroine to ridicule; that poem, according to M. Quicherat's remark, was almost as fatal to Jeanne's memory as a second trial of condemnation. On the strength of its tedium, it called for reprisals. Voltaire had the misfortune to undertake them, and his whole century that of applauding his poem. The idea had become widespread and universally sanctioned, that that subject could not henceforth be treated seriously. This is not the time to lecture Voltaire for a wrong so universally felt, which he himself would be ashamed of to-day. I may mention only that the whole eighteenth century adored Voltaire's licentious *Pucelle*, that the most enlightened people knew entire cantos of it by heart (I have heard them recited myself). Even M. de Malsherbes, we are assured, knew his *Pucelle* by heart. Every age has those currents of influence which none can escape. To-day we have gone to the contrary extreme, and any one who had the base idea of risking the slightest witticism on that subject would have, I think, a very bad reception. This disposition is, after all, most estimable, even in exaggeration; it is the justest and truest, and I am not the one to think of attacking it.

From whatever point of view we may regard her, and even guarding ourselves against all exaltation, where can we see a more pathetic figure, more worthy of pity and admiration, than that of Jeanne d'Arc! At the moment when she appeared, France was at as low an ebb as she could possibly be. During fourteen years of a war, the beginning of which had been signalized by the disaster of Agincourt, nothing had been done that could raise the

morale of a country which was a prey to invasion. The English king had his seat at Paris ; the French Dauphin was with great difficulty holding his ground on the Loire. One of the men who accompanied him as one of his secretaries, one of the most estimable writers of the time, Alain Chartier, has given forcible expression to that state of distress, during which there was not a single place of repose and refuge for a man of honour and a student, except inside the walls of a few cities ; for ' of the fields, one could not hear speak without terror ', and the whole country seemed to have become a *sea*, as it were, where no other right prevails but that of action, and ' where every one's lordship is in proportion to his force '. It was at that moment that in a village of the valley of the Meuse, on the confines of Lorraine, a valley which had itself just been invaded by hordes and had its share in the common grief, a young girl, the daughter of honest labourers, simple, pious, of good conduct, believed that she heard a *voice*. She was about thirteen years of age at the time (1425). The first time that this *voice* made itself heard, was in the summer season about noon, while she was in her father's garden. She had fasted in the morning and on the previous day. Since that day, she continued to hear the *voice* several times a week with a certain regularity and more particularly at certain hours, and to receive counsels from it. This advice was that she should conduct herself well, go regularly to church, and also go to France. This latter counsel was repeated every time more urgently, more imperiously, and the poor child could not contain her impatience to get away. These mysterious and solitary colloquies, these inner struggles endured for two or three years : every echo of the public misfortunes redoubled her anguish. The *voice* did not cease repeating to the young maid that she must go to France at any cost ; it repeated this injunction especially after the day when the English had laid siege to Orleans, that siege the issue of which was holding all hearts in suspense. It commanded her to go at the earliest possible opportunity and raise the siege. And when the child replied that she was only a poor girl, that she could neither ride nor fight, the *voice* replied that she should not trouble herself on that score but go in any case.

This adventurous idea, which tempted Jeanne to go

and fight in France, had transpired in spite of her, and greatly displeased her father, an honest man and of good conduct, who said that he would rather see his daughter drowned, or drown her with his own hands, than witness such a thing. The *voice* allowed Jeanne to elude this prohibition, and, on the pretext of going to see an uncle who lived near there, she quitted her native village, and induced her uncle to take her to the Captain who was commanding at Vaucouleurs, Robert de Baudricourt. Robert at first received her very badly, and spoke rudely to her : ' Her uncle, he said, should take her back to her father and *box her ears* '. But, seeing the persistence of the young girl, the decision and vigour of her attitude and speech, and that she was determined to depart in spite of everything, he was vanquished in the end. Thereupon she got them to take her to the Duke of Lorraine, who gave her some money. The people of Vaucouleurs themselves, moved with interest for her, went to the expense of procuring her an outfit. The uncle and another inhabitant of the place bought her a horse ; Robert de Baudricourt himself wanted to bear the expense of it. The latter, not without a few soldier's jests, one day mounted her on horseback dressed in men's clothes, and gave her a safe-conduct to take her at all hazards to the Dauphin : ' Go, he said to her when he saw her start, and happen what may ! '

Jeanne departed then, and after eleven days travelling arrived without any accident at Chinon, where the Dauphin was for the time being (March, 1429). It is here that her public life begins ; she was seventeen years of age. After being acknowledged and approved by the King, she resolutely assumes the rôle which her faith in God and that incessant *voice* prompts her to take ; she tells everybody what is to be done, she commands. At the end of April she is under the walls of Orleans ; she enters the town, and, after a succession of actions which are at least very remarkable when we consider the strategy of those times, she raises the siege. It appears that she is gifted with that quick and ready something which is the *military glance*. All the following months are filled with her successes and her exploits, at Jargeau, at Beaugency, at the battle of Patay where Talbot is made prisoner, at Troyes which she forces to surrender to the King ; at Rheims where she has him crowned : these are for her four months

filled with glory. Wounded before Paris on September 8, she sees fortune failing her for the first time, and her *voices* ceasing to give her counsel, or at least that counsel paralysed and rendered ineffectual by the obstinate hesitation and the ill-will of the men. From this moment she has only occasional flashes of success ; her star sets, but not her devotion nor her courage. After a succession of adversities and divers attempts, she is taken prisoner in a sortie before Compiègne on May 23, 1430, a little less than thirteen months after her glorious apparition before Orleans. Cast into prison, delivered over to the English by the Burgundians, and by the English to ecclesiastical justice and the Inquisition, her trial is commenced at Rouen in January, 1431, and ends in that atrocious scene at the stake, where she is burned alive as a backslider, convicted of schism, heresy, idolatry, invocation of evil spirits, on May 30 of the same year. Jeanne was not yet twenty years of age.

But do you not feel at once how rapid was this passing of Jeanne, that her life was but a flash, as almost always happens in the case of these marvellous and luminous destinies ?

After the first feeling of interest and admiration for this young, simple and noble victim, one feels a need, in order even to admire with the more reason, of a full and complete explanation of her, of her sincerity and the motives which made her act, of the kind of faith she associated with these motives ; and our thoughts go still farther, they go so far as to inquire what reality and substance there was in her inspiration itself. In a word, in spite of ourselves, we cannot help asking : Can Jeanne d'Arc be explained as a natural, heroic, sublime person, who thinks herself inspired, though she is not inspired by any but human sentiments ? or must we absolutely give up trying to explain her, except on condition of admitting, as she did herself, a supernatural intervention ?

M. Quicherat's publication puts us on the track and furnishes nearly all the necessary elements for henceforth treating this delicate question. Unfortunately one essential link, the very same which, if it existed, would form the chief document for forming a judgment of Jeanne's starting-point and her original dispositions, this link is wanting and has never been found. When Jeanne first came to

Charles VII, that prince had her questioned and examined at Poitiers in order to be well assured of her veracity and her innocence. This first and artless testimony of Jeanne on the first day of her arrival at Court would be of inestimable value ; for though she had to reply later to the same questions before the judges who condemned her, she no longer answered them with the same artlessness nor with the same openness of heart with which she must have given her first testimony. Whatever may be the cause of this irreparable loss, we have out of her own mouth a succession of answers which establish her real state from childhood. Without presuming here to approach a question which belongs entirely to the province of physiology and science, I will confine myself to saying that the mere fact of hearing *voices* and that habitually, and imagining that thoughts born from within and recurring in that form, are external or superior suggestions, is now a well verified fact in science, certainly a very rare, a very exceptional fact, but by no means constituting a *miracle*, nor necessarily constituting *madness* : it is a case of *hallucination* properly so-called.

‘By putting together the marks furnished by these documents, the idea I have formed of the little girl of Domrémy, says M. Quicherat very judiciously, is that of a serious and religious child, gifted in the highest degree with that unique intelligence which is only met with in superior beings in primitive societies. Almost always alone in church or in the fields, she was plunged in a deep communication of her thought with the saints whose images she contemplated, with heaven on which her eyes were often seen to be riveted’. Her father’s cottage adjoined the church. A little farther one ascended to the spring called *Fontaine des Groseillers*, under a century-old beech-tree called *le beau Mai*, the tree of the *Ladies* or the *Fairies*. These *Fairies* to which Jeanne’s judges attached so much importance in order to convict her of intercourse with evil spirits, and whom she hardly knew by name, express, however, the idea of mystery and religion which prevailed in that place, the atmosphere of awe and vague fear which one breathed there. Farther still was the *Bois-Chesnu*, the oak-wood, out of which, according to the tradition, was to come a woman who would save the kingdom lost by a woman (by Isabelle of Bavaria). Jeanne

knew this tradition of the Druidical forest, she would repeat it and inwardly apply it to herself. On certain holy days, the young girls of the village would carry wreaths and cakes to the tree of the *Ladies*, and dance round it. Jeanne would go with them, but did not dance. She must have often sat apart there nursing her secret thoughts. But, from the day when the enemy brought murder and destruction into the valley, her inspiration became more and more clear and real. Her fixed idea was projected outside of her as an ardent prayer and returned to her as an echo: it was the *voice* henceforth which spoke to her like that of a higher being, of a being distinct from herself, which, in her simplicity and modesty, she worshipped. What is touching and really sublime, is that the first inspiration of this humble child, the source of her so undeceitful delusion, was the immense pity she felt for that land of France and the persecuted Dauphin who was the symbol of it. Brought up in the ideas of the time, she had gradually become accustomed to hearing her *voices*, and distinguishing them as those of angels of God and the saints who were best known and dearest to her. These familiar angels were St. Michael and St. Gabriel; those holy counsellors were St. Catherine and St. Margaret. Questioned in the course of her trial on the doctrine which St. Michael, her chief patron and guide, taught her, she replied that the angel, to urge her on, told her of 'the calamity and *pity which was in the kingdom of France*'.

Pity, that was Jeanne's inspiration, not the pity of a woman who weeps and melts into sighs and groans, but the great-hearted pity of a heroine who feels that she has a mission and who grasps the sword to offer succour.

There are, it seems to me, two Jeanne's who have been too often confounded, and the first of whom it is perhaps very difficult to-day to restore: M. Quicherat's publication, however, puts us on the right track to distinguish her. The first Jeanne is not entirely the Jeanne of tradition and legend (and this legend began very soon in her case); the first Jeanne is not so meek nor so well-behaved as the second, but she is more energetic and more true. When, about twenty or twenty-five years after the heroine's condemnation, Charles' rather tardy gratitude provoked and brought to a conclusion the trial of rehabilitation, in-

quiries were set on foot, the old witnesses were interrogated, a great number of whom were still alive. But must I say it? and I only presume to say so after M. Quicherat, who has looked so closely into the matter, those surviving witnesses were themselves already under the influence of the universal legend, and they did not perhaps succeed in entirely escaping it in their depositions. They seemed for the most part eager, not merely to avenge, but to embellish Jeanne's memory, to present in every way her fine side (and that is quite natural), but also the side that was toned down, to make her out the most chaste, the most exemplary, the best-behaved of girls; it may be believed that they suppressed many prominent characteristics. So it is a long way from that mitigated and softened little Jeanne to the Jeanne who jested at Vaucouleurs with Captain Robert de Baudricourt, and replied to him a little wantonly apropos of marriage: 'Yes, when I have done and accomplished all that God by revelation commands me to do, then I shall have three sons, the first of whom will be Pope, the second Emperor, and the third King'. This was only a fair pleasantry in good fighting in reply to some broad jest of the Captain's, and no doubt she gave him the change of his coin, as they say. The latter replied like a real trooper: 'I should like one of them to be mine (*ergo ego vellum tibi facere unum*), since they are to be personages of such great distinction, and I should be the better off in the future'. To which she replied rallyingly: 'Gentle Robert, no, no (*nenni, nenni*), it is not yet time; the Holy Spirit will provide'. I should doubt the truth of the conversation, if it were not for the last reply, which is too spiritual for Baudricourt, who told the story, to have invented alone, and which does not look like an invention.

When this child of sixteen left her village, determined to make her conquest of France, she had a vigour and audacity both of speech and action, which she had already nearly lost and forgotten in the long months of her imprisonment at Rouen. Cheerfulness and confidence were conspicuous in all her words. According to the custom of the time, when she did not hold the standard or the sword, she carried a stick, and this stick served her for several purposes, among others to swear by: 'By my *martin*,' she said, speaking of the citizens of Orleans, I will make them

bring provisions'. This *martin*, which is incessantly in her mouth in her best informed historian, is her *martin-bdton*, her usual oath. When she heard the brave knight Lahire swearing by the name of the Lord, she reproved him, saying that he should do like her and swear by his stick.

At the siege of Orleans, being in the town, and informed by Dunois that a body of English commanded by Fastolf was approaching to succour the besiegers, she was greatly rejoiced by the news, and, fearing she might not be warned in time, to prevent her meeting them, she said to Dunois : 'Bastard, bastard, *in the name of God* (she may have said : *Par mon martin*, but the witness who gives evidence may have thought the expression too undignified), I command thee, as soon as thou hearest of the coming of the said Fastolf, to let me know : for if he passes without my knowing, *I will have thy head cut off*'. Though this may have been only a sort of jest, we see at least what was the tone of Jeanne's jests, that is to say, of the true and primitive Jeanne.

It was said that she had a horror of blood. Asked before the judges whether she would prefer to bear the standard or the sword, she replied that *she preferred forty times more the standard* ; she added that she herself carried that standard when she rushed into the midst of the enemy, in order to avoid killing any man, and that in fact she had never killed a man. This testimony is explicit ; it is in harmony with the legend, with poetry, with that graceful statuette which a young princess artist has left of Jeanne d'Arc pulling up her charger at the sight of the first dead body.¹ Jeanne was not a Judith. We must not imagine her, however, to have been too gentle or too compassionate a maid. There is an admirable saying of hers : she said 'that she never saw the blood of a Frenchman but her hair stood on end'. But we must admit that she thought less of the blood of a Burgundian or an Englishman. As a child, she had known only a single Burgundian in her village, and she would not have been sorry, she said, if his head had been cut off, *if it had been pleasing to God*. At the siege of Orleans, we see her, on the authority of her steward d'Aulon, raining down blows

¹ I am thinking of a *Jeanne d'Arc* of Princess Marie, other than that well-known one which remained in the state of project or model.

thick and fast on the enemy. First storming the Bastille of Saint-Loup, in which were about three hundred English (others say a hundred and fifty), she plants the standard on the edge of the moats. Those inside the place are about to surrender to her, but she refuses to receive them at ransom, and shouts to them that she will take them whatever they may do. She commands the attack, and *almost all are put to death*. Speaking of a certain sword which had been taken from a Burgundian, she said that she used it because it was a good weapon in war, and adapted for giving *good blows and good buffets*. This shows that, if she did not *cut and thrust*, as they say, if she used the point as little as possible, she was ready enough to strike with the flat of the blade, as she often did with her stick. I do not say this to take away from the beauty of the figure, but in order not to disguise the vigour and heartiness of her original physiognomy.

A young lord (Gui de Laval), who saw her in the moment of her glory, and wrote a letter about her to his mother and his grandmother, has described her from head to foot, to the life: 'I saw her mount her horse, he said, all in white armour, with the exception of her head, a little axe in her hand, a large black charger which was very unmanageable at the door of her lodging, and would not let her mount; and then she said: *Take him to the Cross*'. This Cross was near the church, on the edge of the road. 'And then she mounted without his moving, as if he were bound'. The young narrator already sees something almost miraculous in the way in which Jeanne's horse allowed her to mount him near the Cross. All the chroniclers and witnesses are in the same case when speaking of her, and the slightest circumstances, the most natural incidents assume the appearance of miracles. Once mounted on her charger, the Maid, continues Gui de Laval, 'turned towards the door of the church, which was very near, and said in a clear woman's voice: *You priests and men of the Church, form a procession and make prayers to God*'. Then she went on, saying: 'Forward, forward!' Before her went her folded standard, borne by a graceful page, and she had her little axe in her hand.

There we have Jeanne in all her beauty and military grace, speaking in a woman's voice, but with a tone of command.
C.L.—III.

mand, whether addressing her pages or giving her orders to the priests and men of the Church.

We cannot doubt that, on the morrow of the siege of Orleans, she had a moment of exaltation and exhilaration. In the fullness of her mission, she was tempted to say to herself, like all seers : *I am God, I am the voice of God !* She wrote to the towns to open their gates to the Maid, in the tone of a military commander and a messenger from above ; she summons the Duke of Bedford, the Duke of Burgundy, '*in the name of the King of heaven, my rightful and sovereign Lord*', as she called him. When afterwards in prison her letters were shown to her, she had a difficulty in recognizing them herself in cold blood ; and yet she had dictated them in that way. She wrote to the Hussites of Bohemia to make them return to their allegiance : ' I, Jeanne the Maid, to tell you the real truth, should long ago have visited you with my avenging arm, if the war with the English had not hitherto kept me here. But if I hear not soon of your amendment, of your return to the bosom of the Church. I will perhaps leave the English and turn against you to root out the frightful superstition '. The clerk who served her as secretary may have arranged her sentences, but that must have been pretty well her idea. The Comte d'Armagnac wrote to her, from the confines of Spain, to ask her which of the three Popes (there were three of them at the time) was the true and lawful one. She answered him that she was too busy making war to satisfy his curiosity for the moment. ' But when you know that I am in Paris, send me a messenger, and I will truly let you know in which of them you shall believe, and what I shall have heard of them through the counsel of my rightful and sovereign Lord, the King of the universe '. These and similar letters, produced in court, directly supported the accusation brought against her, of having claimed to usurp the office of the angels of God and his vicars on earth. It appears certain to me that, if fortune had continued to favour her in the slightest degree, and if those around her had acquiesced in the rôle she was naïvely assuming, she would have gone a long way with the counsel of her *voices*, and that she would have considered herself as not merely destined to raise the siege of Orleans and to accomplish the coronation at Rheims. This young soul would readily

have taken a higher flight. Once more, I think I can see there a primitive Jeanne d'Arc, possessed with her demon or genius (call it what you will), but with her genius accoutred in the fashion of the time, the true Maid in person, with nothing insipid or mealy-mouthed, cheerful, proud, a little rough, swearing by her stick and using it when necessary, a little exalted and intoxicated by her part, doubting nothing, saying: *I am the voice of God*, speaking and writing in the name of the God of heaven to princes, lords, citizens of the towns, heretics in distant lands, ready to decide questions of orthodoxy and Christendom, if they only allow her time to listen to her *voices*. Already the people urged her forward and were ready in their piety to believe anything of her in advance, to accept anything on their knees. But this great rôle she could only outline, she could little more than foresee in the few months of her triumph, and it is not to be regretted that she did not enter more fully into it: in her special and restricted rôle she is pathetic and sublime.

The witnesses and contemporaries indeed felt this after her death. Hence almost all those who are favourable to her (and all are more or less so in the trial of rehabilitation) endeavoured to believe and make others believe that she never represented herself as destined for any but a very special part, for example to raise the siege of Orleans and lead the King to Rheims, nothing more. It would follow from this that all that her *voices* had foretold to her she had accomplished. But that is a concession of the national and popular imagination which would try, after the event, to make Jeanne infallible. Positive evidence, well known to-day, goes to show that she promised herself, and that her *voices* promised her, many more things than she succeeded in accomplishing; and at the point of death it required an effort of faith and supreme trust in God for her to rise up, after many agonies and faintings, and exclaim even in the midst of the flames that her *voices* had not after all deceived her.

When I emphasized the energetic and rather rough side of the noble shepherdess, far be it from me to deny her the gift of gentleness, a gentleness which was only the more real and sincere for not being excessive! In the march from Rheims to Paris (August, 1429), as with the King she approached La Ferté-Milon and Crépy-en-Valois, the

people came in crowds to meet her, crying : *Noel !* The Maid, who was then riding between the Archbishop of Rheims and the Comte de Dunois, said to them : ' There is a good people, and I have never seen any people rejoicing so much at the coming of so noble a king. And would to God that I were so fortunate, when I end my days, to be buried in this earth ! ' Whereupon the Archbishop said to her : ' O Jeanne, in what place do you hope to die ? ' And she replied : ' Where it shall please God, for I am no more sure of the time and the place than you are yourself ; and would to God, my Creator, that I might now retire, leave my arms, and go and serve my father and mother, guarding their sheep with my sister and my brothers, who would have great joy to see me ! ' There we have Jeanne's true gentleness after her moment of exaltation and when her war-like fury is passed.

She was perfectly chaste, it is unnecessary to say. All the witnesses are unanimous on that point. The old squire Bertrand de Poulengy, who, in his youth, had had the honour of escorting Jeanne on her first ride from Vaucouleurs to Chinon, said that, in all the night resting-places on the journey, he had never had a desire for her. The Duke of Alençon said the same. Young and handsome at that time, and a favourite with her among the captains, because he was the son-in-law of the captive Duke of Orleans, to whose cause she had devoted herself, he testified to having often bivouacked at her side ; he even confessed to having sometimes seen her disrobe, and perceived what the cuirass usually concealed (*aliquando videbat ejus mammas, quæ pulchræ erant*) : ' And yet, he said, I never had any carnal desire for her '. She had that simplicity of honour and virtue which wards off such thoughts.

The judges who condemned her were atrocious, and the Bishop of Beauvais, who conducted the whole affair, combined with his atrocity a consummate cunning ; but what especially strikes us to-day, when we follow the course of that trial, is the stupidity and the *materiality* of those professional theologians who cannot understand that living inspiration of Jeanne, who, in all their questions, always aim at debasing her lofty and artless sense, and cannot succeed in making her coarse. They showed themselves especially curious to know in what shape she had seen St. Michael : ' Did he wear a crown ? was he

clothed ? was he not *quite naked* ? ' To which Jeanne replied to their confusion : ' Do you think that God was not able to clothe him ? ' They returned again and again to that foolish question ; she cut them short by saying that the archangel, when he appeared to her, ' was in the dress and the form of a *very true prud'homme* '—a perfect gentleman.

These questions on the archangel Michael brought her luck. One day when at Poitiers shortly after her meeting with the King, one of the doctors of the place insisted on knowing what language the archangel spoke in, she replied to that too inquisitive Limousin : ' He speaks a better French than you '.

A memorable thing ! the trial of condemnation, instituted and arranged with the purpose of sullyng Jeanne's memory, is a monument more calculated than any other to sanctify it. With M. Quicherat I should be even inclined to believe that, though conducted by her judges and her enemies, it is more to the honour of the real Jeanne, whom I call the primitive Jeanne, and more adapted to show her true character, more worthy of confidence in what concerns her, than the trial of rehabilitation, already impregnated and slightly influenced by legend. Jeanne's finest sayings, the simple, true, heroic words, are registered by the judges and handed down to us by them. This trial was much more regular and legal (from the point of view of the inquisitorial right then in force) than has been thought and repeated since, which does not mean that it is less odious and less execrable. But those judges, like all the Pharisees in the world, like those who condemned Socrates, like those who condemned Jesus, did not really know what they were doing, and their authentic and signed report becomes the immortal and avenging page, the Gospel of the victim.

These judges, all bent upon convincing this simple girl of idolatry, questioned her to satiety upon her standard, upon the image she had had painted upon it : whether she did not believe that standards quite similar to that one were more lucky than others in war. To which she replied that the only witchcraft she used was to say to her men : ' Enter boldly among the English ! ' and that she entered herself.

Upon that same standard which she was reproached

with having had carried into the church at Rheims for the coronation, in preference to those of the other captains, she answered in these so often quoted words: 'It had been in the toil, it was only reasonable that it should be at the honour'.

There is in Homer an admirable passage. That is when Hector, having repulsed the Greeks from before the walls of Troy, turns the tables upon them and besieges them in their camp, and is about to attack them in their retrenchments, determined to set fire to their vessels; suddenly a prodigy is seen: an eagle appears in the sky carrying away in its claws a serpent which, though wounded, tears the breast of its proud enemy and forces it to release its hold. At this sight, a Trojan learned in omens, Polydamas, approaches Hector and, explaining to him the meaning of the presage, advises him to depart from the camp, which he already considered as his prey. At these words Hector is furious, threatens Polydamas with his lance, and says to him: 'What matters it to me what the birds say! I have in my favour the direct words and the command of the great Jupiter: he is the only God whose will counts. *There is only one sovereign augury, that is to fight for our country*'.

When Jeanne stormed Paris on September 8, 1429, the attack in which she was wounded, and which was the first check to her successes, it was a feast-day, the day of the Nativity of Our Lady; and that was also one of the points by which the doctors, her judges, tried to catch her in the very act of irreverence and impiety: 'Was it a feast-day?' they asked her. She replied that she believed that it was a feast-day. And when they insisted, adding: 'Did you do well to storm on that day?' she contented herself with evading the question and holding her tongue, and dropping her eyes, she said: 'Pass on to something else'.

The noble girl, herself caught in the folds of the serpent, did not dare to reply like Hector, but she thought as he did. Like him, she had the direct command and counsel of the supreme God. What did she care for other omens?

Direct inspiration, that was the firm belief and the power of Jeanne d'Arc, as it was also her great crime in the eyes of her judges. She firmly believed in the reality and divinity of her voices; like all seers, she thought she received the spirit from its source and gushing from the

bosom of God Himself. The hierarchic and official Church, the Church as it was then organized, appeared to her worthy of respect no doubt, but to her it seemed to come after her *voices*. She would have felt the power within her to command the men of the Church and the priests, to chastize them and set them on the right path again, just as she did the princes, knights and captains. Consequently, when afterwards the trial of rehabilitation was instituted, Rome did not show itself so eager, so disposed as one might have expected. The King had to force the Pope's hand, and Jeanne, who had so many of the requisite virtues and qualities for canonization as a saint, as understood in those ages, never became more than the saint of the people and of France, the saint of the fatherland.

Historians have at last, in recent years, understood her, presented her in her true light, and it is impossible not to recall here what is said about her in the fifth volume of M. Michelet's *History of France*. Not that a severe and precise criticism, a criticism prompted by a simple taste, could not pick out in that brilliant and vivid work many inaccuracies and many violations of the true tone of the subject. The author aims at effect as he always does, he forces the colours, he puts grimaces upon the characters which intervene, he shows unseasonable levity; he becomes unnaturally gay and lively, brisk and smart; he dramatizes, he symbolizes. In his account of the trial, he creates, between one interrogatory and another, developments which do not result from a reading of the documents themselves. As a rule, the impression resulting from the reading of the originals, when we read them consistently, is much more grave, more naïve, more simple. But when we have made all these reserves, we must in justice acknowledge that M. Michelet has very well grasped the very thought of the personage, that he has rendered with life, spirit and verve the movement as a whole, the excitement of the populace, that public cry of enthusiasm which, more true than any reflection and any doctrine, stronger than any regular power, arose at the time in honour of the noble child, and which, notwithstanding Chapelain or Voltaire, has not ceased to environ her since. M. Michelet's Jeanne d'Arc is more true than that of any of his predecessors.

There remains, I think, a last Jeanne to be extracted

from the papers, published to-day by M. Quicherat, a Jeanne d'Arc set forth with more continuity and simplicity, upon whom criticism, however, can keep sufficient hold to pass nothing over which is of a nature to satisfy both generous and judicious minds. Even though criticism and science should come across points for ever inexplicable in Jeanne d'Arc, it would not, after all, be a great misfortune, I know, nor very astonishing. Shakespeare makes his Hamlet say with admirable truth : ' There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy '. But, after an attentive reading of the documents, and even whilst taking into account the difficulties pointed out by M. Quicherat, I do not think it at all impossible to succeed in extracting from the collection of documents, if rightly read and properly checked, and without doing them any violence, a Jeanne d'Arc who is at once sincere, sublime and natural.

THE ABBÉ GALIANI

Monday, August 26, 1850.

WHEN writing a short time ago about Mme. d'Épinay, I was led to speak of the Abbé Galiani, with whom that lady kept up a Correspondence during the last twelve years of her life. The Abbé Galiani is one of the most lively, the most original and gayest figures of the eighteenth century ; he wrote a good number of his works in French ; he belongs to our literature as much as any foreigner naturalized in France, almost as much as Hamilton himself. But, at the same time that he entered so thoroughly into the ideas and tastes of French society, he contrived to preserve his own character, his physiognomy, his gesture, and also an independence of thoughts which prevented him from acquiescing in any of the commonplaces of the moment. He prided himself on a way of looking at things which was peculiar to him, and he had it indeed ; he did not see like anybody else. The eighteenth century, judged in the Abbé Galiani, reappears to us in entirely new aspects.

The Abbé Ferdinand Galiani, born in the kingdom of Naples on December 2, 1728, brought up at Naples by an uncle Archbishop, had there developed the most precocious dispositions for Letters and for every kind of learning ; but physically he was never able to rise above the height of four and a half feet. This little, very well built and very pretty body was all wit, charm, lively fancies and pure salt ; the gaiety of the mask covered much good sense and many profound ideas. In 1748, at the age of twenty, Galiani won celebrity in his country by a poetic jest, a funeral oration on the *executioner* who had just died : it was a burlesque parody of the Academic Eulogies, which were still more turgid in Italy than elsewhere. The

Academicians of Naples thus turned into ridicule, raised an uproar which increased the success of the ingenious satire. Galiani was about that time devoting himself to the most serious studies : at twenty-one he published a book on *Coinage* ; to an illustrious savant, who was very old and nearly blind, the Abbé Intieri, he rendered the service of describing in his name, in a little substantial and quite practical treatise, a new process for the *preservation of grain*. He was also occupied in antiquities and natural history. Having made a collection of the stones and volcanic matter thrown up by Vesuvius, he presented it, accompanied with a learned dissertation, to Pope Benedict XIV, who was not ungrateful. On one of the packing cases, addressed to the *Most Holy Father*, Galiani had taken the trouble to inscribe these words from the Gospel : '*Fac ut lapides isti panes fiant*, Command that these stones be made bread'. The amiable Benedict XIV took the hint, and in exchange for these stones gave Galiani a living. The Archbishop uncle had already procured him more than one. This little man of four feet six, so gay, so exuberant, so sensible and so learned, was then a *mitred* abbé with the title *Monsignore*.

He came to Paris in 1759 as Secretary to the Embassy, and, with the exception of a few short periods of absence, resided there till 1769, that is to say, ten years : he considered that he did not really live except during that time. Remarked from the first day by reason of his uncommon stature, he immediately disconcerted all mocking curiosity and changed it into friendliness by the vivacity and piquancy of his repartees. He was the delight of the social circles, which fought for his possession ; his particular friends, especially Grimm and Diderot, highly appreciated the freshness and breadth of his views and his lights. 'This little creature, born at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, wrote Grimm, is a real phenomenon. To a lucid and deep glance he adds extensive and solid learning, to the views of a man of genius the gaiety and charms of a man whose only aim is to amuse and please. He is a Plato with the spirits and movements of a Harlequin'. Marmontel likewise said of him : 'The Abbé Galiani was in person the prettiest little Harlequin that Italy ever produced ; but on the shoulders of this Harlequin was the head of a Machiavelli'. This name of Harlequin which

is here repeated is characteristic of Galiani. French though he was and wished to be, he never ceased to be an Italian, a Neapolitan, a fact we should never lose sight of in judging him; he had the peculiar genius of the soil, the facetious, the amusing, the taste for parody. In an article which he wrote on *Polichinelle*,¹ he makes him a native of Campania, not far from the spot where the *Atellan* farces had their birth in antiquity. He appears to think that the spirit of those antique farces may have been perpetuated in the modern original, and he himself, the little Abbé, had inherited something from them, even their buffoonery and licence. He would have great, lofty, sublime thoughts, worthy of Vico, if not of Plato, worthy of Magna Græcia, and suddenly those thoughts were put to flight by lazzis, puns and buffooneries, and those of the worst kind: 'But that is the way with me, he would say pleasantly, I am two different men kneaded together, who do not quite take up the room of one'.

When read to-day the Abbé Galiani loses much; he should have been heard. He did not tell his stories, he acted them. There was something of the *mime* in him. À propos of every serious thing, politics, morality, religion, he had some apologue, some good story to tell, a gay, mad, unexpected story, which made you *laugh to hot tears*, as he used to say and which often concealed a deep moral. He would make a little play of it, a clown's harangue in action, throwing his body about and gesticulating, turning each scene into dialogue with the most artless prettiness, gaining acceptance for his liberties and his indecencies, even from Mme. Necker, even from Mme. Geoffrin. He drew a charming picture of himself in a letter to the latter from Naples. He sees and describes himself in imagination at Mme. Geoffrin's, as in the past: 'Here I am then, the same as ever, the Abbé, the little Abbé, your *little thing*. I am sitting in the comfortable arm-chair, waving my feet and hands like an energumen, my wig awry, talking a great deal, saying things attributed to me which were thought sublime. Ah! Madame, what an error! It was not I who said so many fine things: your arm-chairs are Apollo's tripods, and I was the Sibyl. Be assured that on the straw chairs of Naples I only say stupid things'. No, he did not say

¹ The article may be read on p. 283 of the *Bibliographie parémiologique* of M. Duplessis (1847).

stupid things ; but at Naples the kind of talent he had in the highest degree was more common ; the Italians took less notice of the play and the action, as a more commonplace thing, and they could not discern all the excellence and uniqueness that Galiani put into it. This gesticulating petulance which appeared at first so curious in Paris, and which at once distinguished him, was common in the Via Toledo and its environs. Galiani lacked *listeners* and a circle of his own : ' Paris, he would often exclaim, with an accent of despair, after he had left it, Paris is the only country where I was listened to '. Once retired to his native country, that country which he loves all the same, and of which he is one of the living curiosities, he dies of *words suppressed* and not listened to. Galiani is a real Neapolitan *virtuoso*, but he could not do without his Parisian audience.

Besides, how he was appreciated there ! Whether at Mme d'Épinay's house at La Chevrette, or at Baron d'Holbach's in the Grand-Val, if ever the company is a little dull and the day is sinking, if the conversation languishes, if the rain falls, and the Abbé enters, ' with the pretty Abbé enters gaiety, imagination, wit, madness, everything that makes one forget the troubles of life. The Abbé is inexhaustible in witticisms and amusing stories, adds Diderot ; he is a treasure on rainy days. I said to Mme. d'Épinay that, if they made them at the toy-shops, everybody would want to have one in the country '. Of those happy sayings and those sallies of the Abbé a great number is recorded. Some one was speaking of the trees in the park at Versailles, and saying that they were tall, straight and slender : *Like courtiers*, finished the Abbé. A lover of music, of exquisite music, as the Neapolitans are, as the friend of Paisiello should be, he found fault with the French Opera of the time, which made too much noise ; and when after the fire in the Palais-Royal theatre and the transference of the Opera to the Tuileries, somebody complained that the house was *deaf* (bad for sound) : ' How lucky it is ! ' exclaimed Galiani. But many people, or at least more than one, utter those sallies which come out on the spur of the moment, which last only a flash and are followed by a long silence, and with the Abbé Galiani there was no silence : almost single-handed he kept alive the conversation ; he sprinkled over

it the merriest, the maddest fancies, which often carried their shrewd good sense with them. Therein he was unique in his kind. In his letters to Mlle. Voland, Diderot has preserved a few of the Abbé's good stories, that of the *porco sacro*, the fable of the tall, big monk in the mail-coach, the story of the Archbishop mimicking a Duchess in bed before a Cardinal who is visiting her, and the colic of the spurious duchess and its consequences, in short a thousand untranslatable extravagances which, even under Diderot's pen, remain in the state of simple outlines : that kind of thing is spoken, acted, improvised, but cannot be written. The ancients had the *mimes* (little dramatic scenes) of Sophron, and they are lost ; we have lost the *mimes* of the Abbé Galiani. Diderot, however, has very well reproduced the fable of the *Cuckoo*, the *Nightingale* and the *Ass*, which may be read in his works ; but, in the matter of Galiani's apologues, I prefer that which I find recorded in the Abbé Morellet's Memoirs, and which is famous.

One day after dinner at Baron d'Holbach's the assembled philosophers had been talking at the top of their voices about God and had said things 'calculated to bring down a thunderbolt upon the house a hundred times, if they ever fell for that sort of thing'. Galiani had listened patiently to all that bold dissertation ; at last, tired of hearing everybody taking only one side of the question, he said :

'Gentlemen and philosophers, you are going very fast. I will begin by saying that, if I were the Pope, I would have you brought before the Inquisition, and if I were King of France, clapped into the Bastille ; but as I am so fortunate to be neither one nor the other, I will return to dinner next Thursday, and you shall listen to me as I have had the patience to listen to you, and I will refute you'.

For Thursday! they exclaimed with one voice ; and the challenge was accepted.

'Thursday comes, continues Morellet. After dinner, coffee having been drunk, the Abbé sits down in an arm-chair, with his legs crossed tailor-fashion, as was his wont, and as it was warm, he takes his wig in one hand, and gesticulating with the other, he begins pretty much as follows :

'I will imagine, Gentlemen, him among you who is most

convinced that the world is the work of chance, to be playing with three dice, I do not say in a gambling den, but in the best house in Paris, and his antagonist throwing once, twice, thrice, four times, in short constantly double sixes.

'If this game goes on for any, the smallest length of time, my friend Diderot, who would be losing his money, will say without hesitation, without doubting it a single moment: "*The dice are loaded, I am in a den of thieves*".

'Ah! philosopher! what! because ten or a dozen throws of the dice have resulted in your losing six francs, you firmly believe that it is in consequence of a clever trick, of an artificial combination, of a well-contrived piece of villainy: and when you see in this universe so prodigious a number of combinations thousands and thousands of times more difficult and complicated, and more sustained, and more useful, etc., you do not suspect that nature's dice are also *loaded*, and that there is a big rogue up there who takes a delight in cheating you, etc.'

Morellet only gives the outline of his argument, which, in Galiani's mouth was, he assures us (and we can quite believe it) the most piquant thing in the world and quite equal to the most amusing play.

Behold our philosophers caught in their own snare, behold them, like all the Epicureans in the world, making a *spectacle* of the most serious questions of destiny and human morality, a mere joust to pass the time away, in which the for and the against are treated with equal levity, and quite astonished afterwards (I mean those who survived, like the Abbé Morellet) when all those closed-door theories some day become public and, falling into the street, are recapitulated on the Place de la Révolution in the festivals of Reason and other goddesses. And yet the people were only translating the arguments of the most ingenious; they translated them roughly, according to the wont of translators, but without too much misconstruction.

In this dispute Galiani appears to be playing the part of the hero; he appears to be pleading in favour of order and the supreme Ordainer against the dogmatic and much too outspoken atheism of his friends: let us not, however, form too edifying an idea of him, from this facetious sermon. His mind was too delicate, too sensible, not to be shocked by the absolute theories of Baron d'Holbach: 'At bottom, we do not know enough about

nature, he thought, to form a system of it'. He blamed those supposed systems of nature for destroying all the illusions that are natural and dear to man; and as d'Holbach's book appeared about the time when the Abbé Terray issued a decree of bankruptcy, he said: 'This *M. Mirabaud* (a pseudonym of d'Holbach) is a true Abbé Terray of metaphysics. He makes reductions, suspensions, and causes the bankruptcy of knowledge, of pleasure and the human mind'.

In philosophy Galiani's real system is as follows: he believes that man, when his mind is not alembicated by metaphysics and too much reflection, lives in *illusion*, and is made to live in it: 'Man, he tells us, is made to enjoy the effects without being able to divine the causes; man has five organs expressly built to indicate to him pleasure and pain: he has not a single one to point out to him the true and the false of anything'. Galiani therefore does not believe in absolute truth for man, a truth worthy of the name: the relative truth, which is only an *optical illusion*, is the only one, according to him, that man should seek. According to him, again, it is the same with illusion in the moral as in the physical sense: it engenders results which may be beautiful and good relatively to society and man. It is because our eye is formed in such a way as to see the sky round and vaulted, that man afterwards invented the cupola, the dome of the temple, supported by columns, which is a beautiful thing to look upon. So, in the moral, our internal illusions regarding liberty, the primary cause, have engendered religion, morality, law, all useful things natural to man, and even true if you will, but of a purely relative truth and quite subordinated to the configuration, the primary illusion.

In religion and morality we feel whither such a way of looking at things leads him. At least, if he prides himself upon being unaffected by illusory views and relative impressions, he is not intent upon destroying them in others, wherein he differs essentially from his friends, the French philosophers of the eighteenth century. He would be rather of the opinion of the man who might say: 'I appear to be in life as in an apartment between cellar and attic. In such a case one has a flooring which conceals the rafters, and besides, if one has the means, one lays

down a carpet underfoot. One tries also to adorn one's ceiling to hide the laths. If one could have a fine fresco on the ceiling, a sky painted in Raphael's style, so much the better. So with the illusions of life and the prospects in which it delights : one must respect them and at times take a pleasure in them, even when one knows too well what is beyond'.

That is, in all its truth, the Abbé Galiani's theology, and, even from the point of view of the illusion upon which he insisted so much, I do not give it either as very beautiful or as comforting ; the sum-total of it, he admits, is equal to *zero*. But in its scepticism it has nothing of the arrogance and intrepidity of doctrine which shocks one in his friends. When Mme. Geoffrin fell ill in 1776, in consequence, as was said, of excessive devotional exercises committed during the Jubilee, Galiani wrote to Mme. d'Épinay :

' I have been thinking over this strange transformation (of Mme. Geoffrin), and I find it the most natural thing in the world. Unbelief is the greatest effort which the human mind can make against its own instinct and inclination. It means depriving oneself for ever of all the pleasures of the imagination, of all taste for the marvellous ; it means emptying the whole bag of knowledge (and man would like to know everything) ; denying and doubting always and everything, and remaining destitute of all sublime ideas, knowledge, science. What a terrible void ! what a blank ! what an effort ! It is proved then that the greater part of mankind (and especially the women, whose imagination is double) cannot be unbelievers, and for those who can be, they can only support the effort while enjoying the greatest strength and youth of the soul. If the soul grows old, some belief will reappear'.

He added besides that the unbeliever, the man who persists in being one at all times, accomplishes a real feat of strength ; that he is like ' a rope-dancer who executes the most incredible turns in the air, vaulting around his rope ; he fills all the spectators with terror and astonishment, and nobody is tempted to follow his example or imitate him '. He concluded therefrom that one should never persecute the true unbelievers, the peaceful and sincere unbelievers : wait and do not regard them, there is every chance that a time will come when, this effort against nature being relaxed, the unbeliever will cease to be an unbeliever.

In politics, the Abbé Galiani had ideas which were not less original, less distinct from those of almost all the philosophers of the eighteenth century. He did not, like them, believe (far from it !) in the progress and triumph of reason ; on the contrary, he counted much on the triumph of follies and stupidities. He would have been very ready to say with one of his school : ' It very often happens that the idea which triumphs among men is a pure folly ; but, as soon as this folly has become public, good sense, the practical and interested sense of each one, insensibly lodges in it, organizes it, makes it capable of living, and the folly or the utopia becomes an institution which lasts for centuries. That has been seen '. In the matter of politics he was wont to say : ' Fools make the text, and wise men make the commentaries '. Books like that of the Abbé Raynal (*History of the Two Indies*) excited his sincere pity : ' It is not the book for me, he said ; in politics I admit only pure, unmixed, raw, green Machiavellism, in all its strength, in all its asperity '. This Machiavellism with which he was imbued, and which he displayed far too much, he practised up to a certain point. When he was back in Naples, having become a magistrate and Counsellor of Commerce, whilst insisting upon certain practical and useful reforms, and endeavouring to have them introduced into his own country, he did not by any means, as was said in France, try to propagate *lights*. One day when a French theatrical company was acting at Naples, having been commissioned to examine their plays, he forbade their playing *Tartufe*. He writes to d'Alembert and boasts of it.

When he was heard to talk politics, he is said to have been as charming as he was lucid. When we read him to-day venting his ideas on these subjects in his *Correspondence*, we must make allowance for bold ideas, for paradoxes, for the need to amuse which always tormented him, his mania for predicting and prophesying, and lastly for those perpetual buffooneries which mingle with all that. A serious and deep discussion suddenly turns with him to a pun. In spite of these defects, however, which are very perceptible to-day, we see much good sense, many ideas, every moment horizons and vistas of great extent.

The two contemporaries with whom he was most inti-

mate, most in agreement in heart and intelligence, Grimm and Diderot, regarded him entirely with admiration and enthusiasm, and they speak of him as of a true genius. Galiani himself seems by no means to object to this way of regarding him, and is not afraid of saying volubly and heedlessly : *Montesquieu and I*. Other contemporaries appear to have been more struck by his faults :

'The Abbé Galiani is returning to Naples, wrote the wise and shrewd David Hume to the Abbé Morellet ; he does well to leave Paris before my going there, for I should certainly have done him to death for all the ill he has spoken of England. But it has turned out as predicted by his friend Caraccioli, who said that the Abbé would remain two months in this country, that he would do all the talking himself and allow no Englishman to put in a syllable, and that on his return he would pronounce upon the character of the nation and for the remainder of his life, as if he had never known or studied anything else'.

At one moment Galiani had a great success and a real triumph. 'About the year 1750, says Voltaire, the nation, satiated with poetry, tragedies, comedies, operas, novels, romantic stories, moral reflections still more romantic, and theological discussions on Grace and convulsions, began at length to argue about *grain*. People neglected even the vines to talk about wheat and rye . . .' Corn and everything connected with the commerce in it was very much in the fashion during Galiani's stay in France. Should free exportation be granted ? should it be regulated or forbidden ? The economic sect was being founded at the time, and men of enlightenment devoted much attention and respect to these systematic views. Galiani, very well informed on these questions, having studied them before his arrival in France, had a horror of absolute ideas on such a matter, and above all of the dogmatic, trenchant, mysterious and tiresome way in which the economists presented theirs. He began to dispute and jest on the subject. It seems that it was even to some jest which he had permitted himself on the subject, and which had reached M. de Choiseul, relating to the concessions which that minister was making to the new ideas, that he owed his recall from France, solicited at his Court by M. de Choiseul himself. Be that as it may, Galiani shot his

parting arrow ; he left in manuscript his *Dialogues sur le Commerce des blés* which appeared in 1770, the proofs of which were revised by Diderot. That was the fireworks and the bouquet with which the witty Abbé brilliantly crowned his period of existence in Paris. One cannot form an idea to-day of the success of these Dialogues ; the women raved about them, they thought they understood them ; they were at this time economists, as they have since been interested in electricity, as they had previously been in Grace, and as nowadays they go in a little for socialism : always the fashion of the day or the morrow. These Dialogues of Galiani have been compared with the *Little Letters* of Pascal ; that is saying a great deal. They are less easy to read to-day than the *Provinciales*, which do not fail to weary one a little at times. Galiani had purposely adopted the dialogue form, as being more French : 'That is natural, he said ; the language of the most sociable people in the world, the language of a nation that speaks more than it thinks, of a nation which needs to speak in order to think, and which only thinks in order to speak, should be the best fitted for dialogue'. As to the substance, in opposing the absolute ideas and arguments of the economists, Galiani aimed at making his reader see the political ideas which should rule and dominate even these matters. When he had said of a man : 'He is an economist, and nothing more', he considered him judged and cut off from the sphere of statesmen. 'He is good enough for writing memoirs, journals, dictionaries, he added, to provide work for the publishers and printers, to amuse the idle ; but he is no good for governing'. A statesman, according to him, should not only have a thorough knowledge of special matters, but also of the matter *par excellence* on which he has to operate, that is to say, the human heart. 'You are a delicate anatomist of man', says the Marquis of the *Dialogues* to the Chevalier. The latter replies : 'One must be that when one pretends to speak of men. One must study them well to meddle with the governing of them'. He even denied Turgot this knowledge and this art, and with greater reason he denied it in the men of the sect. Galiani had not awaited the alarm and the tocsin sound of the French Revolution to distrust optimistic and rationalistic statesmen, those honest men as we have seen them under

Louis XVI and since, who are too oblivious of the true, real and always perilous conditions of every political society: 'Believe me, he said, do not fear the rogues, nor the wicked, sooner or later they will throw off their mask: fear the honest man who is mistaken; he is sincere with himself; he desires the good, and all the world trusts him; but unfortunately he is mistaken as to the means of procuring the good for men'. Galiani's friends, and the Abbé himself, were accustomed to say of his book on grain: 'It is not so much a book on the Commerce in grain as a work on the science of government: one should be able to read *the white and between the lines*'. The Government charged the Abbé Morellet to reply to Galiani, and this other abbé, tall in stature as the other was short, as didactic and heavy with his pen as the other was light, replied in such a way that nobody read him. The wily Neapolitan from his distance indulged in all sorts of waggeries at the expense of his slow and patient adversary, during this controversy. Turgot, whose principles were much concerned in the question, explained his views on Galiani's book, and, without denying its charm, he wrote a few words which made clear the opposition of their views, inspirations and doctrines: 'Nor do I like, he said after a few criticisms upon his desultory method, intended to disconcert, nor do I like to see him always so cautious, so hostile to enthusiasm, so much in agreement with all the *Ne quid nimis* and all those people who enjoy the present, and who are very glad to let the world go on as it does, because it goes very well with them, people who, having made their bed comfortably, do not like it to be disturbed'. Turgot touched upon one of the weak points of the little mitred Abbé with his livings. What one is too sensible of besides in these Dialogues, and what Galiani afterwards took care to explicitly confirm, is that his Chevalier Zanobi, who represents the author, 'neither thinks nor believes a word of what he says; that he is the greatest sceptic and the greatest academic in the world; that he believes *nothing whatever about anything whatever*' (*rien en rien, sur rien de rien*). Galiani defines his statesman as 'a man who has the key of the mystery, and who knows that it all comes to *zero*'. Here the pleasantry goes too far; the human marionettes, as long as one wishes to guide them well, cannot be worked with so few springs, and Turgot,

even with his errors and the awkwardness of an honest and enlightened man, who trusts too much in his reasoning, resumes all his advantages over Galiani.

In all things, the Abbé Galiani believed in a *secret* doctrine, an underlying matter that few people are called to penetrate, and that even men of very great talent do not suspect. He held, in his half-serious, half-burlesque fashion, in which thought was duplicated with puns, that there were three kinds of reasonings or *resoundings*: (1) *pitchers'* (fools') reasonings; those were, he thought, the most ordinary, those of the common run of men; (2) *bell* reasonings or *resoundings*; they were those of many poets and orators, men of great talent, but who, he thought relied too much on appearances, the majestic and resounding forms of human illusion. In this class of reasonings he presumed to range those of Bossuet and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. (3) Lastly, still according to him, there were the reasonings of *men*, those of the true sages, of those who have cracked the nut (like the Abbé Galiani), and have found that it contains nothing. I think that at his most serious moments he would have defined the sage as 'the man who, in hours of reflection, frees and strips himself entirely of all relative impressions, and who accounts for his own accident, his own *nothingness*, in the midst of the universality of things'.

The Abbé Galiani left Paris, never to return, in the summer of 1769, and at this date begins his Correspondence with Mme. d'Épinay; from that time it is almost solely through her that he keeps up his connexion with his friends in Paris, and he will often have cause to repeat to her: 'I am lost if you fail me'. This little Machiavelli, who pretended to have no feeling, who boasted of never having wept in his life, and of having seen with dry eyes the departure of his father, mother, sisters, all his family (he was slandering himself), wept and sobbed on leaving Paris, on leaving 'that amiable nation, that loved me so'. He had to be torn away, or he would never have had the strength to depart. All his Correspondence is one long regret. That Naples, which has so many attractions for those who have once seen it, and where one would like to die, is in his eyes only a place of exile. 'Life there is of a killing uniformity. What is one to do in a country where one disputes about

nothing, *not even religion* ? And yet he is occupied with it, and with more seriousness than he says. A King's man, Councillor-Secretary of Commerce, he judges difficult cases, or has them judged ; in the intervals of his charge he applies himself to Letters and study ; he takes up the writings of his youth, to revise, correct and republish them : ' They are all in Italian ; there are dissertations, poetry, prose, researches into antiquity, detached thoughts : it is very young indeed, *but it is my own* '. For these intellectual things he shows a father's artless affection. He also applies himself to new works ; he enters more deeply into his studies on Horace, whom he had already commented with rare taste, sharpened with paradox ; he thinks of extracting quite a system of moral philosophy out of his favourite poet. He devotes himself, with a passion which one is glad to see in him, to his Neapolitan dialect, which he maintains to be pre-eminent and anterior to the other Italian dialects ; he compares it to the *Doric* of the Greeks. Among the poets and writers who had become famous in that patois, one might find, I imagine, more than one type of Galiani who had remained in a pure state and not cut *à la française*. The Abbé, having become a Neapolitan again, begins again, in order to keep himself in practice, to make game of the fools and literary pedants of the place : under the title of *The Imaginary Socrates* he builds up a play, a comic opera, the lines of which are written by another and the music composed by Paisiello ; this play created a furore and it was thought necessary to forbid it. In the midst of these mental distractions, varied by sportings with his cat, who provides him with a thousand themes for philosophical and playful observations, Galiani punctiliously fulfils his duties as a public man and the head of a family. He has three nieces whom he does not spare in his Correspondence (*My nieces are stupid and I have no other company but my cat*), three nieces who clamour for husbands, and to whom, as he says, he acts as *groom*. Whilst appearing to laugh at them he paternally finds them husbands. Meanwhile the poor Abbé grows old and that quicker than others, as if, with his fire and vivacity, everything went more quickly with him, as if the thinner stuff ought to be more quickly consumed. He loses his teeth ; he cannot eat, he who was so dainty ; but above all, O misfortune ! he cannot

speak any more, he only babbles : ' Now, imagine the little Abbé *mute* ! '

By a contradiction which is not uncommon, this Epicurean who will not hear of impulses generous in themselves and analyses them, has for his own part a noble, lofty soul, and all the pride of the gentleman. Ministers change and succeed one another ; his fortune, assuredly good, but not on a level with his talents, stops at one point. What matter to him whether his friend Sambucca becomes minister in place of Tanucci ? ' A minister is only attached to the men who devote themselves, and I cannot devote myself ; I cannot even give myself to the Devil. *I am my own !* '

So also, this man who pretends to be without feeling, experiences all the anxieties of friendship ; the loss of his friends causes him cruel grief. It is true that the number of his friends, those to whom he is really attached and by secret fibres, becomes much reduced with years. Hearing through Mme. d'Épinay of the death of one of his Paris friends, the Marquis de Croismare, he is surprised that he is not so much affected as he would have thought : ' This phenomenon astonished me, made me almost horrified with myself, he says, and I tried to investigate the cause of it. It is not absence ; it is not that my heart has changed and hardened : the reason is that one is attached to the life of others only in proportion to one's attachment to one's own life, and one is attached to one's own life only in proportion to the pleasures it procures us. I understand now why peasants die tranquilly and look callously on the death of others. A man, sent to Bicêtre for good, might hear of all the deaths in the world without any regret '. This theory, very true perhaps, breaks down in his case as soon as he is in presence of a severe loss which really goes to his heart ; he has not yet reached such a state of insensibility as he supposes : ' Time, he remarks, effaces the little lines, but the deep furrows remain. I know now what persons interested me most in Paris ; in the first years I could not distinguish them '. Only on the day when he loses Mme. d'Épinay is his heart broken and his Parisian life closed ; the Parisian Galiani dies with her, the Neapolitan Galiani continues to vegetate. A lady of Paris, Mme. du Bocage, offered to take Mme. d'Épinay's place as his correspondent, to keep him informed about

things and persons ; he declines that distraction and solace :

' For me there is no solace, he exclaims with an unmistakable accent ; I have lived, I have given wise counsels, I have served the State and my master, I have been a father to a large family ; I have written for the happiness of my fellow-creatures ; and, at this age where friendship becomes more necessary, I have lost all my friends ! I have lost everything ! One does not survive one's friends '.

Bravo ! good Abbé, thus you are nobly in disagreement with your advertised principles, with your pretended coldness, and thus we love you !

In a good Notice on Galiani, Ginguené has endeavoured to show that the little Abbé was a *patriot* in the true sense of the word ; that he never ceased, in spite of his jests, trying to be useful, to ameliorate the lot of those around him, and that he did not indeed belie this maxim of his Chevalier in the Dialogues : ' The drudgery of the sage is to do good to his fellow-creatures '. On this point Ginguené appears to be quite right ; but he goes very far when he assures us that, far from being an *unbeliever*, Galiani was always *religious*. All we can say is that Galiani died according to the forms and the proprieties of his cloth and his country, but not without some Rabelaisian pleasantry even at the last. We might add his name to the list of celebrated men who have died jesting. He was not fifty-nine years of age when he expired on October 30, 1787.

His real literary title for us to-day, his Correspondence with Mme. d'Épinay, was published in two volumes, and the two editions of this Correspondence which appeared together and in rivalry in 1818, one after a copy and the other after the originals, are equally defective to the extent of spoiling the charm of the reading. One could not imagine the verbal inaccuracies, the corruptions of the sense, the absurdities in fact, which have glided into the text of both these editions : it would be difficult to differentiate them in this respect. He himself, the Abbé Galiani, who, when writing, certainly thought of the circle of his friends in Paris, and incessantly recommends Mme. d'Épinay to keep his letters, to collect them, did not sufficiently consider the effect they might produce on a

wider and less initiated public. He speaks too much of his private affairs and the postage of his letters. He continually tries to appear amusing, sparkling, and he is not always in the vein: 'I am *stupid* this evening . . . I have nothing *droll* to send you from here . . . I am not gay to-day, and my letter will not be good enough for printing'. That sort of thing perpetually returns to his pen and impairs his naturalness. There are days, one feels, when he pinches himself to raise a laugh. Add, as a drawback, frequent indecencies, incredible even in the century of Diderot and Voltaire, which have no precedent except in Rabelais: 'Let us not give the delicate cause to triumph, repeated Galiani; I wish to be what I am, I will adopt any tone I please'. He used and abused this licence. Some day, when the publishers have leisure and are able to go to any expense, what they should do is to produce a unique volume of Galiani, admitting only the best that he did, the best letters, keeping the text entire, though it might appear a little salted and mordant; they should content themselves with not giving too many specimens of this kind. The business letters should be pruned, also those in which he repeats himself and those in which he cudgels his brains to be witty. Thus one might separate and put in the best light the fine, original, delicate pages, the letters on *Curiosity*, on *Education*, those on *Cicero*, on *Voltaire*, the *Commentator* of *Corneille*, that in which he traces the plan of a *Correspondence between Carlin and Ganganelli*, and so many others. Nobody ever spoke better of France or judged her better than the Abbé Galiani; one should hear him explaining why Paris is the *capital of curiosity*; how 'at Paris there is nothing but the *à propos*'; how we speak so well on the arts, and on every subject, whilst we are often only half successful in practising them. On the occasion of an Exhibition at the Louvre and some criticism or other which had been written on it, he says: 'I observe that the dominating character of the French still shows through. They are essentially talkers, reasoners, jesters; a poor picture gives birth to a good pamphlet; so, you will be better at speaking about the arts than you ever will be in exercising them. It will be found in the end, after a few centuries, that you will have talked about and discussed best what all the other nations have produced best. Therefore

cherish the printing-press ; that is your lot in this base world'. Still, on another occasion he speaks very severely against the liberty of the press, which Turgot was said to have contemplated granting by edict, and thinks it should be very restricted in the interest even of French wit, which has more play and triumphs under constraint. ' There are Empires which are pretty only in their decline ', he says again of us. In short, he understands us, he loves us, he is one of us, and we owe this charming Abbé an honourable, chosen, quite pretty literary burial, *urna brevis*, an elegant little urn no bigger than himself.

On it they might perhaps carve, as an emblem, a Silenus, a head of Plato, a Polichinelle, and a Giace.

M. DE BALZAC

Monday, September 2, 1850.

To write a true Study of the celebrated novelist who has just been taken away from us, and whose sudden loss has excited universal interest, would be quite an undertaking, and the time for that has not yet, I think, come. That kind of moral autopsy should not be made over a fresh grave, especially when he who is in it was full of power, fertility, future, and seemed still so full of works and days. All that one can and should do towards a great contemporary renown at the moment when death seizes upon it, is to point out with a few well-marked touches the merits, the different talents, the delicate and powerful allurements with which it charmed its epoch and gained influence over it. I will try to do this in respect of M. de Balzac, with a feeling free from all personal recollection,¹ and in a measure in which criticism only reserves to itself a few rights.

M. de Balzac was indeed a painter of manners of this period, and he is perhaps the most original, the most apropos and the most discerning. He early considered the nineteenth century as his subject, as his possession; he threw himself into it with ardour and never again left it. Society is like a woman, it wants its painter, a painter all to itself: he was that painter; in painting society he had nothing traditional; he recreated the processes and the artifices of the brush to practise them upon that ambitious and coquettish society which would have no antecedents and resemble no other society; it cherished

¹ See in M. de Balzac's *Revue parisienne* of August 25, 1840, the article which concerns me. If I have forgotten it, I am not afraid of others remembering it. Such judgments only judge in the future those who deliver them.

him the more on that account. Born in 1799, he was fifteen years of age at the fall of the Empire ; he knew then and understood the Imperial epoch with that clear-sightedness and penetration of glance peculiar to childhood, which reflection will afterwards perfect, but which cannot be equalled for its young lucidity. Somebody of the same age as he has said : ' From early childhood I penetrated things with a sensibility so great, that it was like a delicate blade entering my heart every moment '. He might have said the same thing. These impressions of childhood, seized again afterwards in his judgments or paintings, find expression there in a store of singular emotions, and it is precisely those impressions which give delicacy and life to them. As a young man under the Restoration, he passed through and witnessed the whole period from the best point of view perhaps for an artist and observer, that is to say, from below, in suffering and struggles, with those immense desires of talent and nature which make the forbidden objects to be a thousand times divined, imagined, penetrated before they are at last possessed and known ; he understood the Restoration like a lover. He began to attain fame at the moment when the new régime promoted in July, 1830, was being established. This latter régime he sees from a level and even a little from above ; he judged it in its fullness, he painted it fascinatingly in its most salient types and bourgeois reliefs. So, those three epochs of such different aspect which compose the century arrived at its middle, M. de Balzac knew and *lived* them all three, and his work is, to a certain extent, a mirror of them. Who has painted better than he, for example, the old men and the belles of the Empire ? Who, above all, has painted with more delightful touches the duchesses and viscountesses of the end of the Restoration period, those women of thirty, who, already come, were expecting their painter with a vague anxiety, so much so that when he and they met, it was like an electric shock of recognition ? Who, in fine, has caught more to the life and reproduced in its fullness the bourgeois type, triumphing under the July dynasty, the henceforth immortal and the already, *alas !* eclipsed type of the *Birotteaus* of the time and the *Crevels* ?

There we have an immense field, and it must be said that M. de Balzac early set it before himself in all its im-

mentsity, that he travelled over it and searched it in every direction, and still found it too restricted for his valour and his ardour. Not content with observing and divining, he very often invented and imagined. Whatever his imaginings, it was at first by his shrewd and graceful observation that he won the heart of that aristocratic society to which he had always aspired. The *Woman of thirty*, the *Forsaken Woman*, *La Grenadière*, were the first chosen troops that he introduced into the fortress, and he was at once in possession of the citadel. The woman of thirty is not an entirely unexpected creation. Since the existence of civilised society, the woman of that age has held a great place in it, perhaps the first. In that eighteenth century which had had time to improve upon everything, a ball was given at Court, on Shrove Tuesday of 1763, which was called *the Mothers' Ball*; the young, properly speaking, were spectators, and only the women of thirty danced. A pretty song was written on the subject:

Il est plus d'un mois pour les fleurs,
Et toutes les roses sont sœurs.

Here is the prettiest verse of that pleasing chansonette:

Belles qui formez des projets,
Trente ans est pour vous le bel âge;
Vous n'en avez pas moins d'attraits,
Vous en connaissez mieux l'usage;
C'est le vrai moment d'être heureux;
On plaît autant, on aime mieux.
Enfants de quinze ans,
Laissez danser vos mamans!

That is the refrain. We see how lightly the eighteenth century still took that formal rehabilitation, which only lasted one evening. But the nineteenth century was to improve upon it, and the theory of the woman of thirty, with all her advantages, superiorities and final perfections, only dates from to-day. M. de Balzac is the inventor of it, and that is one of the most real discoveries in the order of the familiar novel. The key to his immense success lay entirely in this first little masterpiece.¹ The women afterwards overlooked many things in him and be-

¹ You should read it only in the first editions; the author has since spoiled it for my taste by his amplifications.

lieved him, on every occasion, on his word, because he had divined so well the first time.

Great and rapid as was M. de Balzac's success in France, it was greater perhaps and more undisputed in Europe. The details we might give on this subject might appear fabulous and would be no more than true. Yes, M. de Balzac has painted the manners of his time, and his success would itself form one of the most curious pictures of it. Over two centuries ago, in 1624, Honoré d'Urfé (author of the famous novel *Astrée*), who lived in Piedmont, received a very serious letter from twenty-nine princes or princesses and nineteen grand lords or dames of Germany ; the said personages informed him that they had adopted the names of the heroes and heroines of the *Astrée*, and had formed themselves into an *Academy of true Lovers* : they earnestly begged for the continuation of the work. What happened then to d'Urfé has been literally renewed with M. de Balzac. There was a moment when, at Venice, for example, the society which was there gathered together took it into their heads to take the names of his principal characters, and play their game. For a whole season one saw nothing but Rastignacs, Duchesses de Langcais, Duchesses de Maufrigneuse, and we are assured that more than one actor or actress in this society comedy insisted on carrying out their parts to the end. Such is the rather ordinary law in these reciprocal influences between the painter and his models : the novelist begins, he strikes the keynote of life, he exaggerates it a little ; society is flattered and carries it out ; and thus it comes about that what at first might have appeared exaggerated ends by being no more than probable.

What I say of Venice is reproduced in different degrees in different places. In Hungary, Poland, Russia, M. de Balzac's novels laid down the law. At that distance, the slightly fantastic portion which mingles with the reality, and which close at hand jeopardized its complete success with those difficult to please, disappeared or even was but an additional attraction. For example, that rich and fantastic furniture, in which he accumulated at the will of his imagination the masterpieces of twenty countries and twenty periods, became a reality after the event ; what appeared to us like the dream of a millionaire artist was copied with accuracy ; people furnished their houses

à la Balzac. How could the artist have remained insensible and deaf to these thousand echoes of celebrity, and not have heard in them the accent of fame ?

He believed in them, and this feeling of an at least lofty ambition, made him draw out of his strong and fertile constitution all the resources and productions of every kind that it contained. Balzac had the body of an athlete and the fire of an artist enamoured of glory ; he needed no less to be equal to his immense task. Only in our days has one seen those vigorous and herculean constitutions, *forcing out of themselves*, so to say, all that they are capable of producing, and for twenty years keeping the difficult pledge. When we read Racine, Voltaire, Montesquieu, it does not exactly occur to us to ask whether or not they were physically robust and of strong constitution. Buffon was an athlete, but his style does not show it. The writers of those more or less classical ages wrote only with their thought, with the superior and quite intellectual part of themselves, with the essence of their being. To-day, in consequence of the immense labour which the writer lays upon himself and which society imposes upon him at short notice, in consequence of the necessity of his striking while the iron is hot, he has not time to be so platonic nor so delicate. The writer's person, his whole organization is involved and betrays itself even in his works ; he writes then not only with his pure thought, but with his blood and muscles. The physiology and hygiene of a writer have become one of the indispensable chapters in the analysis one makes of his talent.

M. de Balzac prided himself on being a physiologist, and he certainly was, though less strictly and precisely so than he imagined ; but physical nature, his own and others', plays a great rôle and continually makes itself felt in his moral descriptions. This is not a reproach, it is a trait which affects and characterizes all the descriptive literature of that time. One day M. Villemain, still a young man, was reading to Sieyès his *Eulogy of Montaigne*, that charming eulogy, the first he wrote, and so full of lightness and freshness. When he came to the passage where he says : ' But in reading Rousseau I should be afraid of keeping my eyes too long fixed upon culpable weaknesses, which one should always keep out of sight . . . ' Sieyès interrupted him, saying : ' But no, it is better to

let them come near, in order to study them at close range'. The physiologist, curious before everything, here crossed the path of the man of letters who prefers taste to everything. Shall I confess it? I am like Sieyès.

That means, too, that I am a little like M. de Balzac. But I check him and I check myself on two points. In his style, in the delicate parts, I love that *efflorescence* (I cannot find another word) by virtue of which he gives to everything the sense of life and makes the very page to quiver. But I cannot accept, under the cover of physiology, the continual abuse of that quality, that style so often sensitive and melting, enervated, roseate, streaked with all tints, that deliciously corrupt style, quite Asiatic as our masters used to say, more broken in places and more effeminate than the body of an ancient mime. Does not Petronius, from the midst of the scenes he describes, somewhere regret what he calls the *oratio pudica*, that *chaste* style which does not abandon itself to the *fluidity* of every movement?

Another point on which I check M. de Balzac the physiologist and anatomist, is that in this branch he has at least imagined as much as he has observed. A delicate anatomist in the moral sphere, he has certainly found some new veins; he has discovered and injected, as it were, into portions of lymphatic vessels hitherto unperceived; but he invents them too. There is a moment when, in his analysis, the true and real plexus ends and the illusory plexus begins, and he does not differentiate them; most of his readers, and especially his lady-readers, have, like him, confounded them. This is not the place to insist on these points of separation. But M. de Balzac has, we know, a declared weakness for the Swedenborgs, the Van-Helmonts, the Mesmers, the Saint-Germains and the Cagliostros of every kind: which means that he is subject to delusions. In a word, to follow out my quite physical and anatomical metaphor, I will say: When he holds the *carotid* of his subject, he firmly and strongly injects to the bottom of it; but when he is at fault, he injects all the same and perseveres, creating, without being quite aware of it, imaginary networks.

M. de Balzac had a pretension to science, but what he had, above all, was a sort of physiological *intuition*. M. Chasles said very truly: 'It has been repeated *à outrance*

that M. de Balzac was an observer, an analyst ; he was better or worse, he was a *seer* '. What he did not see at the first glance, he usually missed seeing ; reflection did not bring it back. But how many things he could see and devour with a single glance ! He came, he talked with you ; so intoxicated with his work and apparently so full of himself, he could question with profit, he could listen ; but, even when he had not listened, when he seemed to have seen only himself and his idea, he left you, having absorbed and carrying away with him all that he wanted to know, and afterwards astonished you with its description.

I have said that he was intoxicated as it were with his work ; and indeed, from his youth up, he never came out of it, he lived in it. This world, which he had half observed, half created in every sense ; those characters of every class and every quality whom he had endowed with life, became confounded in his eyes with the world and the characters of real life, which were hardly more than a weak copy of his own. He saw them, he talked with them, he would cite them at every opportunity as persons of his intimacy and yours ; he had so powerfully and distinctly created them in flesh and bone, that once posed and put into action, they and he never separated : all these personages surrounded him, and, in moments of enthusiasm, began to form a circle around him and drag him away into that immense dance of the Human Comedy, the mere sight of which makes one dizzy in passing, as it made him dizzy first of all.

M. de Balzac's peculiar power needs to be defined : it was that of a rich, copious, opulent nature, full of ideas, of types and inventions, which is incessantly reappearing and is never weary ; that was the power which he possessed and not the other, which is no doubt the more real, that power which dominates and governs a work, and which makes the artist remain superior to it as to his own creation. We may say of him that he was a prey to his work, and that his talent often carried him away like a chariot drawn by four horses. I do not expect a man to be always like Goethe and ever to have his marble brow above the burning cloud ; but he, M. de Balzac, held (and he has written it) that the artist should hurl himself headlong into his work, *like Curtius into the*

chasm. A talent of that pace implies much verve and fire, but also some hazard and much smoke.

To expound his true literary theory, we need besides only borrow his own words : if I take, for example, *Les Parents pauvres*, his last novel and one of the most powerful, published in this same paper ¹, I find in it, apropos of the Polish artist Wenceslas Steinbock, the author's favourite ideas and all his secrets, if he ever had any secrets. For him, ' a great artist to-day is a prince without a title ; he is fame and fortune '. But this fame is not won by trifling and dreaming ; it is the prize of stubborn labour and applied ardour : ' You have ideas in your brain ? a fine thing forsooth ! I too have ideas . . . What is the good of having a thing in one's soul, if one does not turn it to account ? ' That is what he thought, and so he never spared himself the relentless labour of execution. To conceive, he said, is to enjoy, *to smoke enchanted cigarettes* ; but without execution everything vanishes in dreams and smoke : ' Constant labour, he said again, is the law of art as well as of life ; for art is idealized creation. So the great artists, the poets, wait not for orders or customers ; they engender to-day, to-morrow, always. There result, that habit of work, that perpetual knowledge of the difficulties which keep them *in concubinage* with the Muses with her creative powers. Canova lived in his studio and Voltaire lived in his study. Homer and Pheidias must have lived thus '. I purposely wanted to quote this passage, because with the merits of courage and labour which are there declared and which honour M. de Balzac, we seize the modern tendency laid bare, and the singular inadvertence which made him degenerate and at once lay rude hands on that same beauty which he pretended to pursue. No, Homer and Pheidias did not thus live *in concubinage* with the Muse ; they always received and knew her chaste and severe.

' The beautiful in everything is always severe ', said M. de Bonald. A few words of such authority are necessary to me ; they are like the immutable and sacred columns which I only wish to point at from a distance, in order that our very admiration and our reluctant homage to a man of marvellous talent may not delude themselves beyond lawful bounds.

¹ *Les Parents pauvres* first appeared in the feuilleton of the *Constitutionnel*.

M. de Balzac speaks again somewhere of those artists who have 'a furious success, a success calculated to crush those who have not shoulders and reins strong enough to bear it ; which, by the way, he says, often happens'. In fact, for the artist there is an ordeal still more formidable than the great battle which he must fight sooner or later, namely, the morrow of the victory. To support this victory, to bear this vogue, to be neither terrified nor discouraged by it, not to fail and abdicate under the blow as did Léopold Robert, one must have real strength, and feel that one has only risen to one's level. M. de Balzac had that kind of strength, and he proved it.

When they spoke to him of fame, he accepted the word and more than the omen ; he himself sometimes spoke of it pleasantly : 'Fame, he said one day, to whom are you speaking of it ? I have known, I have seen it. I was once travelling in Russia with some friends. The night overtakes us, we ask hospitality at a country-house. On our arrival the lady of the house and her companions surround us with attentions ; one of the latter leaves the room immediately to fetch some refreshments. In the meanwhile my name is mentioned to the lady of the house ; we start a conversation, and when the lady who had gone out returns with a tray in her hand, the first words she hears are : "What ! Monsieur de Balzac, you think then . . ." The lady starts with joy and surprise, drops the tray, and all the contents are broken. Is that not fame ?'

They smiled, and he smiled himself, and yet he enjoyed it. That feeling supported and fired him in his labours. The wittiest and most lamented of his disciples, M. Charles de Bernard, lately dead, lacked this motive power ; he doubted everything with irony and taste, and his so distinguished work suffered from it. M. de Balzac's work has gained in verve and heat from the very intoxication of the artist. An exquisite delicacy contrived to glide through this intoxication.

All Europe was for him a park in which he had but to stroll to meet with friends, admirers, eager and sumptuous hospitality. That little flower which he showed you hardly dried he had plucked the other morning returning from the Villa Diodati ; the picture he described to you he had seen yesterday in the palace of a Roman prince. From one capital to another, from a villa in Rome or the

Isola Bella to a country-house in Bohemia or Poland seemed to him but a step. The touch of a wand transported him from one to the other. We cannot say for him that that was a dream ; for what long seemed the dream and illusion of the poet, a devoted woman, one of those he had deified in his passage, had realized for him into a happiness.

All the artists of the time were his friends, and he has magnificently introduced almost all of them into his works. He had a taste, a passion for works of art, paintings, sculptures, antique furniture. When he was at leisure (and he often contrived to be so, devoting his days to his caprices, consuming his nights in labour), he loved to hunt after what he called *beautiful bits*. He had ferreted out all the *bric-à-brac* shops in Europe, and he would talk about them wonderfully. So, when afterwards he introduced into a novel those masses of objects which in another would resemble a sale catalogue, he did so with colour and life, with love. The pieces of furniture he describes have life ; the tapestries quiver. He describes too much, but the ray of light generally falls on the right spot. Even when the result does not correspond to the attention he seems to have devoted to it, the reader has the impression of having been moved. M. de Balzac has the gift of colour and of *confusion*. Thereby he beguiled painters, who saw in him one of themselves transplanted into literature, and a little out of his element.

He had little appreciation of criticism ; he had cut his way through the world almost in spite of it, and his fire was not, I think, of that kind which could be moderated and directed. He said somewhere of an artist, a sculptor who was discouraged and had fallen into idleness : ' Having again become an artist *in partibus*, he had a great success in the drawing-rooms, he was consulted by many amateurs ; he dropped into criticism like all the impotents who give a false promise at their start '. This last touch may be true of a sculptor or painter who, instead of applying himself to work, spends his time in talking and arguing ; but in the order of thought, these words of M. de Balzac, which are often repeated by the pens of quite a school of young littérateurs, are both (if they will pardon my saying so) an injustice and an error. Yet, as it is always a very delicate matter to demonstrate to people

in what way a man is or is not impotent, we will pass on.

A true, sincere, intelligent Aristarchus might, however, have been very useful to him, if he had been able to tolerate him ; for that rich and luxuriant nature lavished itself ungovernably. There are three things to be considered in a novel : the characters, the action, the style. The characters M. de Balzac excels in posing ; he makes them live, he carves them deep and indelibly. There is exaggeration, there are minutiae, what matter ? they have it in them to live. With him we make refined, graceful, coquettish and also very gay acquaintances, on other days we make some very villainous ones ; but once made, we are very sure of never forgetting either the former or the latter. He is not satisfied with carefully delineating his characters, he has a happy and singular knack in his nomenclature, which fixes them for ever in the memory. He attached the greatest importance to this mode of baptizing his people ; following Sterne, he attributed to proper names a certain *occult power* in harmony or in irony with his characters. His *Marneffes*, his *Bixious*, his *Birotteaus*, his *Crevels*, etc., are thus named by him in virtue of some confused onomatopœia, according to which the man and the name resemble one another. After the characters comes the action : with M. de Balzac it is sometimes weak, it deviates, it exaggerates. He succeeds less in this point than in forming his characters. As to the style, it is refined, subtle, fluent, graphic, without any analogy with tradition. I have sometimes wondered what effect one of Balzac's books would produce upon a simple mind which had been hitherto nourished upon the ordinary good French prose in all its frugality, one of those minds which are no longer met with, formed by reading Nicole, Bourdaloue, by that simple, serious, scrupulous style, *which goes far*, as La Bruyère said : such a mind would have a vertigo for a month. La Bruyère said again that for every thought there is only *one* right expression, and that it must be found. M. de Balzac, when he writes, seems to ignore this saying of La Bruyère. He has successions of living, restless, capricious, never definitive expressions, *tentative* and searching expressions. His printers know it well : when his books were printing, he would alter, revise every proof *ad infinitum*. With him

the mould itself was in a constantly liquid state, the metal was never fixed. Even though he had found the desired shape, he still sought it.

Would the most cordial criticism, that of a friend, a comrade like Louis Lambert, ever have made him accept a few comparatively sober ideas, to introduce them into the torrent of his talent, in order to contain and regulate it a little? Without any pretensions to turn him out of his fruitful path, I should have liked him to have kept before his mind a few axioms which I think essential in every art, in all literature :

'Clearness is the varnish of the master' (*Vauvenargues*).

'A work of art should express only that which elevates the soul, gives it a noble enjoyment, and nothing more. The feeling of the artist should not aim any farther; all the rest is false'. (*Bettina to Goethe's mother*.)

'Good sense and genius are of the same family: wit is only a collateral' (*Bonald*).

Lastly, admiring Napoleon as he did, and dazzled, as so many others had been dazzled, by that great example, translated and reflected in literature, I should wish that he had dropped once for all those insensate comparisons and emulations, intended for children, and, if it was absolutely necessary that he should seek his ideal of power in military matters, that he had sometimes asked himself this question, which is fitted to find a place in every good French art of Rhetoric: 'Which of the two is the finest, an Asiatic conqueror dragging innumerable hordes at his heels, or M. de Turenne defending the Rhine at the head of thirty thousand men?'

Let us not force natures, and, since death has closed his career, let us accept from the talent which is no more, the rich and complex inheritance he has left us. The author of *Eugénie Grandet* will live. The father, I was about to say the lover, of *Mme. de Vieuménil*, of *Mme. de Beauséant*, will keep his place on the most secret and chosen shelf of the boudoir. Those who look for joy, gaiety, merriment, the satiric and frank vein of the Rabelaisian Tourangeau, cannot disregard the illustrious *Gaudissarts*, the excellent *Birotteaus* and all their kind. There is choice, as we see, for everybody. If I had space, I should like to speak here of M. de Balzac's last novel, one of the most remarkable, in my opinion, if not the most flattering for the society of the

present day. *Les Parents pauvres* displays that powerful talent arrived at its highest maturity and giving full scope to its imagination. He overflows, he swims, and seems quite in his element. Never has the *topsy-turvy-dom* of the human rag been exposed and shaken so openly. The first part of this Novel (*La Cousine Bette*) presents characters of great truth, and also those exaggerations which the author almost inevitably indulges in. Bette, in the first place, who gives her name to the book, is one of those exaggerations: we can hardly believe that that poor woman who at first appears as a simple peasant girl from the Vosges, ill-clad, rough, a little envious, but not spiteful or wicked, should at one moment be transformed into an almost handsome woman of the world, and so perverse and infernal, a regular female Iago or Richard III! That does not happen in real life; that girl belongs to the race of *Ferragus* and the *Thirteen*. Our corrupt and vicious society does not admit of such atrocious hatreds and revenges. Our sins are certainly not small, our crimes however are not so big. But other characters of the novel are true, profoundly true, and before all Baron Hulot, with his unbridled love of the fair sex which gradually drags the gentleman to dishonour and the old man into degradation; and Crevel, excellent in every respect, in tone, gesture, pleasantry, is bourgeois vice in all its bearing and importance. For here, observe well, we have not to deal merely with eccentricities and absurdities, nor even with human follies, but vice is the mainspring, social depravity forms the matter of the novel. The author plunges into it; to see his verve, one would think that in places he delights in it. A few elevated, pathetic scenes draw tears; but the atrocious scenes predominate; the sap of the impure overflows; those infamous *Marneffes* infect everything. This remarkable novel, studied separately, would offer food for reflections which would affect not M. de Balzac alone, but all of us, more or less mysterious or avowed children of a sensual literature. Some, sons of *René*, have hidden and as it were *clouded* their sensuality under mysticism; the others have openly unmasked it.

M. de Balzac often thought of Walter Scott, and the genius of the great Scotch novelist was, as he said, a strong incitement. But, throughout that immense work of the

amiable wizard, had he not recognized, in the happy words of M. de Lamartine :

Les nobles sentiments s'élevant de ces pages,
Comme autant de parfums des odorantes pages ?

Had he not inhaled that universal charm of purity and of health, those wholesome currents of air which circulate through them, in spite of the conflict of human passions ? After emerging from *Les Parents pauvres*, one feels the need at once of dipping into those pages, of flinging oneself into some limpid and healthy reading—of plunging into some canto of Milton, *into pellucid streams*, as the poet says.

In a less incomplete work, and if we were free to roam at will, we might establish and graduate the points of resemblance between Balzac's talent and that of his most celebrated contemporaries, George Sand, Eugène Sue, Alexandre Dumas. In a quite different branch, but with a view of human nature which is not more rose-coloured nor more flattered, we might take M. Mérimée as his opposite, as his contrast, in tone and manner.

M. Mérimée has not, perhaps, any better idea of human nature than M. de Balzac, and, if any one has seemed to libel mankind, he is certainly not the man to rehabilitate it. But he is a man of taste, of tact, of exact and rigorous sense, who, even when excessive in idea, preserves a restraint and discretion in his manner ; who has the personal sense of ridicule as much as M. de Balzac lacks it, and in whom, however much we may admire his clearness, his power of touch and the accuracy of his burin, we cannot but miss a little of that verve which the other had in excess. We might say that in him the accomplished man of the world, the *honnête homme*, as they used to say, early kept the artist in check.

Mme. Sand, is it necessary to remind ourselves ? is a greater, a surer and firmer writer than M. de Balzac ; she never feels about for her expression. She is a great painter of nature and landscapes. As a novelist, her characters are often well caught at the outset, well outlined ; but they quickly turn to a certain ideal, showing a return to the school of Rousseau, and approaching a system. Her characters do not live from one end to the other ; at one moment they pass into the state of a type. She never libels human nature, nor does she flatter it ; she tries to

raise it, but whilst aiming at ennobling it she only forces and distends it. She is angry especially with society, and disparages whole classes in order to urge the claims of individuals *at any cost*, who in spite of all still remain half abstract. In a word, the masterly sureness which she carries into expression and description, fails her in the realization of her characters. This is said with all proper reserve, in view of so many charming and natural situations and scenes. As to her style, it is a gift of the first quality and the first stamp.

M. Eugène Sue (we will leave out of account the socialist and speak only of the novelist) is perhaps M. de Balzac's equal in invention, in fertility and in composition. He has a wonderful skill in erecting large frameworks ; he has characters which live too, and which we remember in spite of ourselves ; above all, he has action and dramatic machineries which he can set going with ease. But the details are often weak ; they are numerous and varied enough, but not so delicate, not so deeply cut, showing an observation much less original and less fresh than those of M. de Balzac. He has a gay humour besides, manifested in some happy and natural types ; but he is fond of and affects eccentricities, and delights too much in their description. Neither of them set great store by healthy nature ; they are fond of working upon the corrupt and spurious. Eugène Sue is unable to write as much as Balzac, nor as well nor even as badly, with so much subtleness in his bad work. In short, he committed the error of not abandoning himself solely to his natural instincts, of consulting the systems of the day, of professing them in his last novels, a thing which M. de Balzac never did. The latter at least obeyed nothing but his instincts, his favourite inspirations, and abandoned himself to them more and more like an artist who does not compromise. M. de Balzac never followed any stream but his own.

As to M. Dumas, everybody knows his prodigious verve, his spirit and his facility, his successful staging, his witty and always animated dialogue, that nimble narrative which hurries along incessantly and is able to remove obstacles of space without ever becoming weak. He covers immense canvases without ever wearying either his brush or his reader. He is amusing. He holds one, but not so firmly as M. de Balzac.

Of the three latter, M. de Balzac is the one who holds one most firmly, and who cuts the deepest lines.

The February Revolution dealt M. de Balzac a hard blow. The whole structure of elaborate civilization, such as he had ever dreamed it, seemed to be crumbling to pieces; for a moment Europe, his Europe, was about to fail him as France was doing. He was, however, already rising up again, and meditating a picture, drawn at close quarters, of society in its new form, the fourth in which he had seen it. I might here trace a sketch of his future novel, his last projected novel, of which he always spoke with enthusiasm. But what boots another dream? he died of a heart disease, like so many men nowadays who toil and moil through life. It was the same malady to which, hardly three years ago, Frédéric Soulié succumbed, whom it would be unjust to forget when grouping the principal leaders of our literature.

Perhaps, over the grave of one of the most prolific of them, of the most inventive certainly that it has produced, now is the time to repeat that this literature has provided its school and had its day; it has given us its most powerful, almost gigantic talents; we may well believe now that the best part of its sap, both good and bad, is exhausted. Let it call a truce at least, let it take its repose; let it give society time to rest after its excesses, to settle down again to some sort of order, and to offer new pictures to other painters with a fresher inspiration. In latter years a terrible emulation and a furious sort of competition has begun amongst the most powerful men of this active, devouring, inflammatory literature. The fashion of publishing in feuilletons, which obliged the writer at every new chapter to deal a great blow at the reader, carried the effects and tones of the novel to an extreme, desperate diapason, which could not be sustained for any length of time. Let us recover a little. Whilst admiring some of the men who have turned their talents to account whilst lacking the conditions necessary for a better development, let us wish our future society to possess pictures not less vast, but more restful and comforting, and their painters a more reposeful life and inspirations not indeed more delicate, but more softened, more healthily natural and serene.

M. BAZIN

Monday, September 9, 1850.

ON the 23rd of last month there died in the prime of life a man whose name and works were little known except to those who devote attention to the productions of the intellect, but who was highly appreciated by the best judges, gifted with a rare, elevated, wide and serious intelligence, with a delicate, curious, sometimes singular but always distinguished taste, with a unique, ironical and original character; one of the wittiest and least commonplace of writers, whom it would be unjust to treat as he at times seemed to wish to be treated, that is to say with neglect and silence.

M. Bazin's principal writings are (I class them in order of interest and importance):

1. *A History of France under Louis XIII, and under the Ministry of Cardinal Mazarin*, a large composition which appeared in two parts, the four volumes which treat of Louis XIII in 1838, and the two volumes which treat of Cardinal Mazarin in 1842. This History, a second revised and definitive edition of which the author has since published (in 1846), gained, in 1840, the second of the *Gobert prizes* which the French Academy annually awards to the two best works which treat of the History of France. During ten years M. Bazin seemed worthy of holding his place after M. Augustin Thierry, and his name was besides proclaimed by M. Villemain in the public sitting of August 28, shortly before his death, which occurred a fortnight later.

2. *Some Studies in History and Biography*, collected into one volume (1844). This comprises some pleasing and interesting bits, published for the most part in reviews and concerning persons more or less connected

with the epoch treated by the historian : Sully, Henri IV, the elder Balzac, Bussy-Rabutin, etc. ; it does not include two very fresh articles on Molière, since published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (July, 1847, and January, 1848).

3. Two volumes of Studies on manners, entitled : *L'Époque sans nom* (*The Nameless Epoch*, 1833). Under this rather solemn title the author merely gives us some sketches, moral, satirical, ingenious, very delicate and accurate enough, the result of his observations in his strolls through Paris. It is a pleasant book in the style of Duclos, and contains a good picture of the manners of his time.

4. Lastly a volume which I only mention for the sake of completeness, an historical novel called : *La Cour de Marie de Médicis, Mémoires d'un Cadet de Gascogne* (1830). Following the fashion of the moment which encouraged this sort of pastiche, the author imagines a cadet of Gascony coming to Paris at the beginning of the reign of Louis XIII, when the Maréchal d'Ancre was in favour, and relating his first adventures. The book leaves one cold and does not deserve a second reading.

But the three other publications constitute a real work, worthy of a place in every good modern library, and they will ensure M. Bazin a distinguished rank as a historian, as a literary critic, an observer and moralist.

Who was this man then who, with uncommon talents, kept himself exactly on the limit between consideration and celebrity, and in a way mistrustful of the latter ; who was so much relished and appreciated by the limited number of those who came in contact with him, and so readily ignored by the others ? I must positively write what he detested most except at a distance of two centuries at least, a biography or at least something like it, which will give some life, some physiognomy, to a subject which of itself would speak little.

Anais de Raucou was born at Paris on the 8th Pluviose of the year V (1797), which carries us back to the middle of the Directory. By a royal order, dated April 25, 1834, he was authorized to join to his own name that of M. Bazin, his benefactor, 'and to call himself henceforth Bazin de Raucou'. He was, by the way, always known by the former name. But there is no doubt that the excessive importance he attached to the irregularity displayed by

the Bulletin of Laws, which we shall not here enter upon, had a great influence upon his natural disposition and supplies a key to more than one singularity in his character which would be otherwise inexplicable. Whatever the explanation of this reserved point, his father, a wealthy barrister of the Rue Vivienne, had him carefully educated; the boy was sent to M. Lepitre's boarding-school, where the instruction was good, and where the pupils at the same time acquired a kind of foretaste of Royalism even under the Empire. Young Bazin conceived an early aversion to the rule whose end he witnessed; while still at college he one day, I am told, perpetrated some poetic prank which had a circulation, some *Napoléone* on a small scale, which had the honour of disturbing the minds of the Imperial police. Meanwhile he was doing excellently well at the Lycée Charlemagne, whither M. Cousin, another old pupil of M. Lepitre, had preceded him with distinction, and where the most brilliant pupils of the time gathered around the Rhetoric chair already made illustrious by the young Villemain. M. Bazin was one of the most famous of them, and one of those who carried away most distinctions. The events of 1814 put a sudden end to these academic jousts. M. Bazin was seventeen years of age; he warmly espoused the Restoration and joined the Gardes-du-corps.

He shared in all the doings of the Gardes-du-corps in 1814, during this first and brief Restoration, and was no doubt among those who escorted the fugitive princes to Béthune. This year was to be fruitful and profitable to him in the way of irony and experiences. After the Hundred Days he did not resume service, but devoted himself seriously to the profession of advocate. He appears to have liked that profession, in which he won esteem and consideration; he found some friends of his youth in the same career, among whom are mentioned MM. Baroche, Delangle and Bethmont. In the sketches of manners which comprise his *Époque sans nom*, he blunts the point of his epigram when he comes to the Palace of Justice. He remarks that nowhere does one meet with more cordiality, a more easy intercourse and more real equality than among barristers: 'In no sphere, he says, do reputation, age and talent assert their superiority less and exact less deference than in this singular corporation in which the relations are almost always hostile'. However, in spite of the real

and substantial merits he came to possess, and partly by reason of those same merits, he lacked something which wins success at the bar ; when he had fully argued his case in good terms, he was unable to repeat himself and, if necessary, to produce fresh arguments : ' The judge expects it, he said slyly ; and perhaps the barrister who is most inclined to correct this disposition is obliged to bring forth a second array of the same arguments, when he sees that the Court has not been impressed by the first. Another obstacle to the brevity of counsel's speeches is the unreasonableness of the client who is never satisfied even with winning his suit, unless his counsel has gone at great length into all the useless facts, all the idle circumstances and gossip details which might have made him lose it '. Ages ago in a letter to Tacitus, Pliny very well explained how important it was, in his opinion, for the advocate to plead diffusely and superabundantly, if he wishes to succeed : many a man who pays no heed at first to a good argument, will be convinced by another that is not so good. Now, M. Bazin liked, above all, conciseness and moderation, proper qualities which appeal only to those minds which are made to appreciate them.

With an intelligence which was becoming more developed and widened every day, with a mental aptitude which was able to apply itself to many subjects, but without any of those talents and those impetuous gifts which declare themselves spontaneously, he sought his right profession and felt his way. At one time he attempted, I am told, comedy in the style of Gresset ; he might have found some happy lines, no doubt, perhaps a scene ; but the comic vein was not his strong point. He might have had a readier hand for satire. Meanwhile, he competed for the prizes offered by the Academy. In 1820 he wrote on the set subject, a sort of parallel between parliamentary and forensic eloquence, but his pains were wasted. In 1822, in the competition on the subject of *Le Sage*, he had a first honourable mention, but came after two prizes and an accessit. In short, or rather in the long run, this way of academical competitions led him to gain, after 1830, the prize for a *Eulogy of Malesherbes*. I will here venture only one remark : of all the distinguished writers of our days, not one, I am certain, wrote more epigrams against the French Academy than

M. Bazin. In all his writings he never missed an occasion to discharge his malicious shaft at that body. I amused myself, when reading him again, by marking the passages in his works; they are innumerable. In one place, speaking of the reception solemnities, he declares mildly and in a doleful tone that 'it must be admitted that the time of those brilliant gatherings that fashion counted among its red-letter days, is past'. In another place, alluding to the annual prizes, he casts scornful ridicule on the Academy 'which doles out its pittance of fame in the shape of a gold medal to the shamed paupers of literature'. On that theme he is inexhaustible. Wishing to publish his own Discourse which gained the prize, he begins by ridiculing the circumstances in which it was written, and shows how this prize in honour of Malesherbes was offered under the Legitimate monarchy and awarded under the July dynasty, not without some modifications of the conditions and the programme. In a small way he follows Cicero and Chateaubriand, who respectively ridiculed the triumph and the Blue Ribbon, whilst aspiring to obtain them. Now what do you think all this little unheeded warfare led to, in the case of M. Bazin? It led to his being for ten years the proclaimed and well endowed laureate, the irremovable laureate, of the Academy. He, who was so afraid of appearing to fall, like any one of us, into some contradiction with himself, did not escape that one.

It is true that, with a remnant of fidelity to his epigrams, he never yielded to the friendly suggestions that were frequently made to him that he should enter the ranks of candidates for a chair, although he certainly united all the qualifications of solidity, seriousness, distinction and even moderated opinions, which are preferred or expected in a candidate for that honour.

I return to him as he was in the prime of the Restoration period, tall, well built, with a strong, and refined physiognomy, enjoying easy circumstances which suggested independence, in apparent possession of all the conditions of happiness, and yet with a touch of irony and secret bitterness which was not concealed, but more generally brought into prominence, by the piquant attractiveness of his mind. His friends, those who were most qualified to judge him, have compared him to Duclos for his tendency

to observe and moralize. He was indeed a moralist who proposed some day to paint a vaster and grander picture, who thought to himself that it was time to come out of his groove, and, after due preparation, rose to the height of history. There was also something of Chamfort in him, but it was all something more subtle, or at least more suppressed; some parts of his character were reflected upon themselves, and did not come out.

The idea had occurred to him to write a novel, *Le Gil Blas révolutionnaire*; but he had none of that imagination which creates characters or enlivens the details. More obedient to the taste of the times and the seriousness of his own disposition, he meditated applying himself at leisure to a large Historical Study, and, in the meanwhile, he gave his attention to politics. He chose his ground where a man of his opinions could do so with most freedom and sincerity, and joined the staff of the *Quotidienne* under M. Michaud.

It would repay one to write a descriptive account of the political newspapers of the Restoration time, especially of the three principal journals: the *Journal des Débats*, the organ of Royalism as understood by Chateaubriand, and following the latter in all his transformations; the *Constitutionnel* of that time, the centre of pure liberalism; and the *Quotidienne*. The latter, though purely Royalist, included among its writers a good many intelligent men, very free in their convictions and very disillusioned. M. Michaud, a shrewd and amiable man, who became more and more witty as he grew older, and who is quoted for a great many of his charming sayings, was the Voltaire of this little group which counted some young names that were already worthy of being associated with his. The character of the young staff of the *Quotidienne* was to indulge (what was quite natural) in none of the liberal platitudes of the time, to laugh at them openly, and also to laugh less openly at the declamations and the monarchical and religious commonplaces which they so nearly put in practice, which they seemed to share and often to exaggerate, but to which they really adhered only from the political side. That was the case with several at least, and with M. Bazin more than with any: a sceptical mind, without any enthusiasm, not very serious in respect of religious beliefs, he was a sincere Royalist, as an eight-

eenth-century follower of Voltaire might have been, as a man generally must be who considers the majority of his fellow-creatures little able to behave reasonably. But, putting aside this stock of Royalist conviction, he would not have borne too close an examination in the other articles of his creed, and an ordinary confessor might have been shocked.

It is not a biography I am writing, but the little I have said was indispensable in order to enter into the mind of the writer and to take the measure of the man. M. Bazin was himself one of those who at once take mental stock of others, and who perhaps suffer a little from not being able at once to give others their own measure : the result being that later, too late, when one gives them their due they do not thank one for it, and respond to their success only with a half-smile ; the habit of irony is contracted.

The first work published by M. Bazin, *Mémoires d'un Cadet de Gascogne ou la Cour de Marie de Médicis*, shows that at this period of 1830 he was already engaged upon his great historical work ; he anticipated it by isolating a few episodes, a few pictures in marquetry in accordance with the taste of the day. But when these supposed Memoirs appeared in 1830, the seam which had been struck ten years before, and in which some men of intellect and talent had made their mark (MM. Trognon, Vitet, Mérimée), seemed to be worked out : the downfall of the Restoration decidedly put an end to it, and M. Bazin's work excited little notice. The novel, by the way, is dull and lifeless ; the self-styled Gascon is quite wanting in Gascon spirit ; we feel throughout that it is the author who is speaking, and not his cadet. He does not observe the style of the times. In short, the witty touches scattered about here and there do nothing to redeem the artificiality and the factitiousness of this branch of literature.

In one part of the story we find a chapter headed *Les Poètes* : it is a description of an imaginary dinner of wits and men of letters of the time of Louis XIII, presided over by the famous poet Théophile. The chapter is introduced by a note which characterizes the author himself through one of his peculiarities : ' We thought right, he says, to inform the reader that he is going to enter the company of men of Letters. That is a precaution that a

host who knows his company always takes in a like circumstance'. This note is terribly suggestive of the grand seigneur of former days. It was one of M. Bazin's foibles that he did not regard himself as a man of Letters; what was he, if not that? I do not know besides why he should think it necessary to take such precautions with his note. There is nothing very gay or lively in this chapter, I assure you. It is not even a conversation, it is a Course on French poetry, a dull Course without any relief, seasoned with plenty of pleasantries and innuendoes aimed at the Romantics of the time. We feel that the author does not speak of all those things *tanquam potestatem habens*, as the Scripture has it, 'as one having authority'. His best powers lie elsewhere.

M. Bazin's second work is of quite a different nature; in directly attacking the manners of this century the author found his right theme. This book, which bears the title *L'Époque sans nom* (*The Nameless Epoch*), and begins with a letter addressed to M. Michaud, containing an epigrammatical account of the July days, is full of pleasing observations and clever sarcasms. The author takes you through Paris during the years 1830-1833; he paints you the bourgeois of the time, the street-boy and the Mayeux of the time, the riot of the time, and all things Parisian at that date. I emphasize the date, because in reading these volumes over again, those who enjoyed them in their first bloom will find them a little antiquated and already partly out of date. It is the same with everything that was not inspired at its birth with the fire of genius, or fixed on the canvas at once with an immortal brush. M. Bazin's style in this work is no more than refined, elegant, inclined to raillery, but not free from pretentiousness, and it lacks variety. It is after the style of *L'Ermite de la Chaussée d'Antin*, but better executed and more distinguished; it is La Bruyère in a small way, without the relief, the power and brilliancy of the master, and his sharp outlines. I find a number of shrewd remarks, ranged side by side, rather too much of what they call in the class-rooms *the spirit of Latin verse*. Good judges, however, have remembered and point out to me a real gem in these volumes, the life and death of Mayeux, the famous Mayeux (the grotesque type of our political versatility), who came into the world

at Paris on July 14, 1789, and who successively called himself *Messidor-Napoléon-Louis-Charles-Philippe Mayeux*, after the names of the different régimes which he by turns espoused or rejected, Mayeux who was for a moment carried in triumph after 1830, and who died about 1833, from grief and shame at having been dismissed from the ranks of the National Guard and struck off the muster-roll as guilty of making people laugh. For we may remark in passing that M. Bazin never misses an opportunity of laughing at our National Guard. Aristocratic and sybaritic bourgeois that he is, he rebels against that *citizen* institution. On this point he is again a man of Letters: between two absurdities, in his eyes, and two evils, he chooses the lesser, and, for the nonce, he would be prepared to say, like that other of my acquaintance: 'I have the misfortune, for a man of Letters, to belong to a nation that is never prouder than when it wears a pompon on its head, and obeys the order of a corporal'.

His Paris bourgeois is represented as having suffered a double accident in the affairs of June (1832): 'he gained the loss of his voice and the *croix d'honneur*, two misfortunes in the life of a reasonable man, who equally fears the doctor and *ridicule*'. That is very strained and affected. The author was himself afterwards exposed to this ridicule which he feared. One of his friends who was in the ministry obliged him to accept the cross of honour, and even induced him, according to custom, to ask him for it. The biter was bit, and wrote a letter which he made as epigrammatic as he could, and which ended somewhat as follows: 'That being so, my dear friend, I will accept a small piece of that ribbon of which you have a yard'. That was another of the little contradictions to which he attached so much importance, and which in spite of his wit he was not able to avoid.

We are slowly approaching the historian. M. Bazin was forty years of age when he aspired publicly to that serious title, of which he realized all the responsibility, and which he justly held. We have reason to believe that, when he turned his attention to the little studied period of Louis XIII, with the design of tracing it down to the Fronde and not stopping till he reached the death of Mazarin, he was to some extent guided by his desire to contradict commonly held ideas, to set right certain

prejudices and to entirely reverse certain time-honoured opinions. In a word, I think that in approaching history, he entered upon it with an ironical purpose. That was a narrow gate; but, no sooner had he penetrated into this rich domain, no sooner was he in presence of the sources, when he enlarged his view and resisted his own humour. His mind which, in its appreciation of the facts themselves, had regained its practical superiority, corrected its own anticipated impressions, or at least forced them within the rules of good sense and justice. The epoch he had chosen lent itself less than any other to grandiloquence and what is called eloquence. The historian of Richelieu needed some of that so long-suffering and crafty patience with which the great minister had to suffer so many delays and wear down so many subordinate ambitions before raising himself to the pinnacle and triumphing. The historian of Mazarin required a patience that was no less, to disengage himself from the intrigues, the scandals and noisy triumphs of the Fronde. M. Bazin was the best qualified to traverse without tedium those intermediary epochs of history, and to skilfully and judiciously turn them to account. He was not afraid of making his narrative, in order to remain the more faithful to the truth, reflect the slowness or the complication of the political movements; that fantastic and intricate play of things suited his humour, and he delighted in unravelling the twisted threads. The danger with him lay rather in his not always rising sufficiently to the height of decisive situations.

In his excellent Report of 1840, M. Villemain pointed out the merits and suggested the omissions, when he said :

‘History always remains to be written; and every distinguished mind, whilst availing itself of the progress of ideas which it adopts or combats, discovers in the events related by others new lessons and views. Without having exhaustively carried out the double task he had set himself, M. Bazin has written an instructive and interesting work. If his account of some of the events does not offer the terrible pathos that the imagination of the reader expected, one should not the less appreciate the impartial delicacy of his mind. He explains rather than paints, but his whole narrative is enlightened by an ingenious penetration: and in the difficult art of history, the extent and precision of one’s researches, the accurate

understanding of great things, and the sustained talent for writing a large work, are rare qualities, worthy of an enduring success'.

M. Bazin's narrative, without any show of reflections and under an appearance of impartiality and indifference, is generally disposed in such a manner as to give any one who is able to understand it, a habitual sense and contempt of human folly and inconsistency. The chapters which deal with the downfall, the assassination of the Maréchal d'Ancre, and the condemnation of his widow, are, to any one who looks at them rightly, scenes of a bitter tragedy-comedy. M. Bazin takes a pleasure, when he meets with a widespread feeling of hatred or popular favour attached to certain celebrated historical names (as those of Concini, Sully, Henri IV or any other), in disturbing that feeling, in exposing it and reducing it to its right proportions.

He loves to disagree with common opinion, and it is his whim perhaps, when he comes across a commonly established opinion, to contradict it. But, as a rule, he has a right judgment of humanity, he does homage to prudence and real ability, and gives the right measure of his characters without allowing himself to be beguiled or carried away. At the beginning of his history he makes much use of Malherbe's letters, and esteems the poet as a clear-sighted and well-informed witness, one of those dry, caustic, mordant minds, of the same type as his own. Sometimes, very rarely, his thoughts find a vent in moral reflections which betray the lofty misanthropy which fills him. Wishing to explain, for example, why the Connétable de Luynes, who deserved at least as much hatred and contempt as the Maréchal d'Ancre, did not incur the same unpopularity after his death, he said forcibly: 'The reason is that he died in the midst of his grandeur, which continued in a rich and powerful family; and the vulgar always need the authority of a reverse to make them quite despise the children of fortune: they are hardly able to comprehend anything but a catastrophe'.

But as a rule his slyness is concealed, and might escape the notice of many a reader who peruses the book carelessly and credulously. Thus, when the Comte de Soissons is reconciled with his nephew the Prince de Condé in 1611, and makes common cause with him, the partnership is so close, that the Memoirs of the time remark with surprise

that nothing was able to break it until the death of the Comte de Soissons, 'which occurred a year after'. The historian's slyness lies entirely in this touch: *which occurred a year after*. He wishes it to be understood that an agreement so brief, observed on both sides, was almost a miracle among princes, considering the fidelity and the good faith current at the time.—Thus again, when the Prince de Condé is a prisoner at Vincennes in May, 1617, this prince is a little astonished when the Princess his wife comes to mitigate the hardships of his captivity by sharing them. 'Shortly after this rapprochement, says the historian without any apparent innuendo, the Princess was found to be pregnant, and before seven months were over she was confined of a child that did not live'. Which means in good Gallic that the Princess was already supposed to be pregnant when she thought it necessary to rejoin her husband. At every moment M. Bazin in this way hints at certain things, but he does not say them.

That is fault from the point of view of history, which, in its simplicity and power, cannot permit that kind of covered artfulness and epigram. Indeed, one might think sometimes that the historian is not sorry if the innocent reader does not take in the whole scope of what he is saying, and that it is his ambition to be understood only by the more knowing ones.¹

Another fault in M. Bazin as historian or biographer, a fault which cannot fail to excite impatience in those honest readers who do not understand all those wiles, is that he never cites his sources or his authors, in spite of the fact that he uses them so scrupulously and so accurately that he can defy confrontation. He saw that the error of the day was to make a display of learning, to accumulate notes and citations from authors at the foot of every page, and, for fear of appearing pedantic, he fell into the contrary error; he never indicates the place from which he borrows a quotation. If you are curious, so much the worse! even when he instructs you, he is not sorry perhaps to humble you a little, and conceals something from you. This singular affectation, which is entirely petty in a

¹ There is a *History of Louis XIII*, which is not much read, by Father Griffet, who continued Daniel; this History appears to me preferable to M. Bazin's, broader and more natural, showing very careful research, and leaving on the mind of the reader a clearer idea of things and persons.

man of such real and substantial merit, has long offended a critic who has the highest opinion of M. Bazin, and whom I feel inclined, following his example, to quote without naming him. This critic says :

‘ M. Bazin is a man of much wit, who prides himself, when he writes, on having nothing in common with the scholar by profession and the pedant. I will only take the liberty of asking if there is not another sort of pedantry, an entirely abstaining from giving quotations and notes in a kind of work where they are naturally expected, in carefully suppressing every modern proper name, even when the author has them most in his mind and alludes to them, in that quite epigrammatic eagerness not to leave uncorrected any little errors that others have made. The *gentleman* (*honnête homme*), says La Rochefoucauld, is he who prides himself on nothing : M. Bazin prides himself too much on being the *gentleman*. When one practises a craft, one should frankly belong to it : that is the most natural and convenient course, and shows the best taste ’.

I will sum up in a few words the literary defect of M. Bazin’s historical manner : he goes his way, he aims at the truth, he does his best, but he does not condescend to put himself sufficiently in the place of the ordinary reader ; his behaviour towards him is not courteous nor considerate.

In spite of these faults which I do not seek to disguise, and though for minds that are not very serious and attentive it is a rather difficult work to read in all its continuity, M. Bazin’s History is a rare and original composition, not offering, like other so-called histories, a brilliant and witty piece of marquetry, put together of shreds of quotations picked up from a few dramatic scenes, but a thoughtful, meditated narrative, entirely new, in which account is taken of every piece of testimony, in which the historian constantly holds the threads in his hand, in order to impart the greatest degree of probability and truth to the connexions of events, and to make his facts agree with the greatest possible accuracy. In the description of Mazarin’s ministry, M. Bazin endeavoured to contradict and, as the vulgar would say, to *demolish* to the best of his power the Cardinal de Retz, whom he looked upon as a witty mischief-maker of that time, like enough to other mischief-makers of the present day whom he designated. It is difficult to believe that the sort of personal enmity he felt for Retz did not carry

him away to several excesses in the contrary direction ; all that Retz brings into prominence, for example, he affects to suppress and obliterate. One should examine closely into the details of this historical proceeding. But it has at least become impossible henceforth to form a complete idea of this epoch of the Fronde without heeding the testimony, the able and well-drawn-up report of M. Bazin.

The volume which contains his biographical and literary Notices comprises perhaps the most really distinguished and perfect things he has written. Here his manner becomes entirely pointed and original. If at the beginning of his History¹ his style was still somewhat academic and almost rhetorical, here, under the form of criticism, it shows an elegant correctness, where the piquancy of his wit predominates.

One could not imagine a biography of Henri IV more epigrammatic from beginning to end than that traced by M. Bazin ; it was hardly becoming in a Royalist writer to say such things about the first Bourbon king. I much prefer, however, his excellent sketch of Bussy-Rabutin, a less lofty subject, in which that kind of wit was more in place. M. Bazin comprehended very well, in this curious case of Mme. de Sévigné's cousin, how much distinction and sarcasm, or even mental precision, was reconcilable with capricious vanity and moral vices. With this piece on Bussy should be coupled what he wrote in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on Molière : in this he demolished some traditional errors which have been repeated by all the biographers ; he rectifies dates, and adds some new facts to those already well known on the origins of the great dramatist. Yet, after reading this article with its inexorable accuracy, after appreciating its amusing sobriety, I could not refrain from writing on the margin this moral rather than literary impression : ' That is all very well, but why this ill-disguised bitterness for such simple things ? why could he not correct a date or a fact

¹ For example, in March, 1612, two years after the death of Henri IV, on the occasion of the announcement of the double marriage between the Houses of France and Spain, the historian describes how the public mourning gave place to rejoicings ' in which was revived that passion for luxury, brilliancy and pleasure, so long buried under the sad *livery* of grief '.

without appearing to write a satire, and saying to his neighbour: *You are a fool!*"¹

Other unpublished pieces of M. Bazin have been spoken of, which come under the same studies of the seventeenth century; he gave much attention to Saint-Simon and Mme. de Sévigné, whom he admired above everything as a writer. The friends of Letters should desire these pieces to be in a sufficiently finished state for M. Paulin Paris, who is intrusted with their keeping, to be able to give us the benefit of them.

M. Bazin was, in fact, before everything, and this I consider his most estimable quality, a true and passionate lover of literature. Associating with the men of the best time, who spoke the best language, he himself continued to improve in this respect. Very different from the moralizing historian Lemontey, with whom he still had something in common, but who never ceased to be academic in the unfavourable sense of the word and precious, his own style became simpler; so that the last writings that issued from his pen are his best and most perfect productions; he attained excellence. It may be said of M. Bazin that he had made himself a contemporary of the seventeenth century. He had acquired the somewhat pretentious taste of only reading and associating with the people of that period. He knew a thousand accurate particulars about them, gathered and noted by the way in his historical journeyings. He possessed the good editions, and never failed to detect the blunders which the best editors had been unable to avoid: he would occasionally regale some of his rare and scholarly friends with them. His literary conversation, especially towards the end, was, as we are told by those who were privileged to hear it, full of interest and practical information, and even of charm when he felt that it was appreciated. He was little concerned about his reputation; he would not have gone a step in search of it. As a rule he would not have solicited any honours, though ready to accept them

¹ A precise note I have before my eyes, which I owe to the friendship of M. Taschereau, shows me that, though priding himself on being more accurate than his predecessors, even M. Bazin did not escape several suppositions and errors of fact, whilst indulging in the cheap pleasure of posing as a corrector on points that others had already rectified before him. Conclusion: even when we think we are most right, let us be modest.

if they came to him ; and yet, even when they anticipated his desires, they were not sure of always finding him in the humour to welcome them. He was always restrained by the fear of being either duped or made ridiculous. Though so happy at first sight, and apparently so well endowed both by nature and fortune, he assumed a defensive attitude against society, as if he feared its coming to too close quarters. Leaving aside this characteristic disposition, and when he succeeded in getting the better of the eccentricities into which it sometimes drove him, he was a man of a judicious, broad, superior, above all strong and acute mind, a good judge of his fellow-men. The *Nil admirari* of Horace was his motto. He held every kind of charlatan-ism in contempt ; he had a fine disdain of popularity, and from elevated motives. I do not know whether any man can cordially despise popularity who does not really lack the needful qualities for obtaining it ; but, although M. Bazin assuredly had none of that *sympathetic* something, whether real or assumed, which takes with people, I think that he would have despised their favour in all cases. In that respect he was a philosopher, a sage who has seen the underside of everybody's cards, one of those spirits that Gabriel Naudé speaks of, entirely *cured of simplicity and folly*, and who know the truth. ' Folly is something like liability to small-pox, said Horace Walpole, everybody must have it once in his life '. M. Bazin had cured himself very thoroughly then of the universal ailment ; he was very little marked by it and showed hardly more than a mere trace of it. His manner of life was peculiar, a little odd. He realized, but with more singularity, the portrait he drew of the *flâneur* (idler), in the last chapter of his *Époque sans nom*. According to him, Paris did not belong to the king (when it had a king) ; it does not belong to the people, who are always busy and occupied : ' the only, real sovereign of Paris is the *flâneur* '. How often I have met him in the afternoon or evening, on the boulevards or under the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, always alone, enjoying his empire incognito ! It was better not to recognize and salute him : I think it would have shocked him, and he would have taken it as an offence. Thus he strolled along, observant, smiling to himself and adding to his stock of ideas. Add that, according to him, ' the *flâneur* has good lodgings, in a fine quarter, near the

boulevards ; that his dwelling-place contains everything that conduces to comfort. For the best way to enjoy tranquilly the pleasures of the outside world, is never to be pursued by the dread of returning home '. He had long taken care to realize in his own case all the conditions of happy *flânerie* (including, of course, the bachelor state) ; and, again like that *flâneur* he has so well described, he completed the resemblance by his fear of visitors, who keep a gentleman at home when he wants to go out. He certainly did not like them, and never encouraged them. The place where he was best met and heard, most to advantage perhaps, was the Cercle des Arts, his habitual resort, where he used to appear late and was ready enough to talk when surrounded by a little group of intellectual men. He even made himself liked there. In short, he was one of the rare spirits and eccentrics of that time. I could easily have given an apparently more favourable, at the same time a more indistinct, portrait of him in every respect ; but I think the greatest favour one can do a distinguished man of great and lofty parts, the truest service one can render to his memory as a man of Letters, a man, that is to say, who desires in the end to be held in memory, is to paint him as true to life as one can, with all the lines of truth as prominent as possible. In this way at least those who come after will be enabled to form an idea of him and to recognize him among so many other men of equal distinction, who are praised in a uniform and monotonous manner.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR¹

Monday, September 16, 1850.

IN a somewhat consecutive Study of the eighteenth century, Mme. de Pompadour is inevitable. We must not be afraid of calling things and epochs by their names; and the name by which the eighteenth century may be most correctly designated from many points of view, from that of taste, of the style then universally prevailing in the arts of design, in fashions and the usages of life, in poetry even, is surely that gallant and *pompon*-ed name which seemed expressly made for the fair Marquise and which rhymed so well with *amour*! All the arts of that time bear her stamp; the great painter Watteau, who came too soon for her, and who created an enchanted pastoral world, seems to have decorated and beautified it only for her to take possession some day, and to bloom and reign in it. Watteau's successors unanimously delighted in acknowledging the sceptre of their natural patroness. In poetry, Bernis is not alone in being quite Pompadour, but Voltaire is the same in three parts of his short line poems, as well as all the lighter poetry of the time; there is the prose besides, Marmontel in his *Moral Tales*, even Montesquieu in his *Temple de Gnide*. The Pompadour style assuredly existed before the coming of the beautiful Marquise, but it is recapitulated in her, she crowns it and personifies it.

Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, born in Paris on December 29, 1721, came of that rich bourgeoisie and that world of finance which had come so much to the fore during the last years of Louis XIV, and in which it was not uncommon to meet with an intellectual and sumptuous epicureanism: she brought elegance into it. One is

¹ *Madame de Pompadour*. Memoirs of Mme. du Hausset, her waiting woman.

agreed in saying that in her youth she had every accomplishment and every grace. She had been most carefully educated in the arts of pleasing, and had been taught everything, except morality. 'I found there, writes the President Hénault somewhere to Mme. Du Deffand, one of the prettiest women I have ever seen; she is Mme. d'Étioles. She knows music perfectly, she sings with all possible gaiety and taste, knows a hundred songs, acts in comedies at Étioles, on a stage as fine as that of the Opera, with machinery and changes of scenery . . . ' There we have her to the life as she was before her connexion with Louis XV. Daughter of a gallant mother who was the mistress of a farmer-general, married provisionally as it were to the latter's nephew, it seemed that her whole family, seeing she was so seductive and so delicious, had early intended her for something better, and were only awaiting the occasion and the moment. 'She is a royal morsel . . . ' people said on all sides; and the young woman ended by believing in this destiny of king's mistress as she did in her star. Louis XV was then in the first splendour of his tardy emancipation, and the nation, which had long been at a loss where to place their affections, had begun to love him distractedly. Mme. d'Étioles did the same. When the King went to hunt in the forest of Sénart, not far from Étioles, she came across his way as if by chance in a pretty calash. The King remarked her, gallantly sent her some game; then, in the evening, some *valet-de-chambre* or other, related to the family, insinuated into the master's ear all the desirable details and offered his services to carry the matter through. All that, for a beginning, is not edifying, but it is history.

Louis XV, gifted with so noble a form and so many apparent graces, was from his early youth the most feeble and timid of kings. Nothing is better adapted to give a picture of his moral nature at this date, than eight letters of Mme. de Tencin to the Duc de Richelieu and a fragment of Memoirs of the Duchesse de Brancas. Long delicate in his childhood, the young King, whose life seemed to hang by a thread, had been brought up with excessive precautions, and had been spared every effort, more so even than is usual with princes. Cardinal de Fleury had conducted his whole education in this direction of effeminacy; the old man, more than eighty years of age, both

from habit and cunning, had constantly kept his royal pupil in leading strings, turning him aside from anything that resembled an idea or an enterprise, eager to uproot in him the slightest manifestation of will-power ; he has accustomed him to nothing but easy things. Nature besides had done nothing to help the young man to surmount that effeminate and senile education. He had not a spark within him, except that which soon showed itself for things of the senses. The young courtiers, the men of ambition who surrounded him, saw with vexation the perpetuation of that guardianship of the Cardinal and that insipid boyhood, that part of a schoolboy played by a king who was already over thirty years of age : they saw that there was only one way of emancipating him and making him the master, and that was to give him a mistress. He had had mistresses for years, but always like a school-boy and under the Cardinal's good pleasure ; he wanted one who was really a mistress and who would *un-page* him. They contrived everything to that end, and one may say that Louis XV, in this new kind of chase, had no more to do than the sluggard kings in the other kind of chase, that is to say, to aim at the game which is driven before him. He began by being successively in love with three sisters, the daughters of Mme. de Nesle, so much did habit and a kind of routine still dominate him even in inconstancy. The Cardinal de Fleury being dead, intrigues played about him more than ever ; since the King was such a cipher in respect of will, it was only a question of what hand should grasp the tiller. Mme. de Tencin, who would have liked to push her brother the Cardinal to be head of the ministry, did not know how to obtain a hold upon that apathetic will of the monarch : she wrote about it to the Duc de Richelieu, who was then at the wars ; she persuaded that courtier to write to Mme. de La Tournelle (Duchesse de Châteauroux), in order that she might try to draw the King out of his torpor in public matters :

‘ What my brother was able to say to him on the subject, she added, has been useless : it was, as he told you, like speaking to a rock. I cannot conceive how a man can consent to be such a cipher, when he might be something. Any other but you would be unable to believe how far matters have gone. What goes on in his kingdom does not seem to concern him : nothing affects him ; in the Council, he shows an absolute

indifference ; he signs anything that is put before him. In truth, to have to deal with such a man is enough to drive one to despair. One can see that, in any matter whatever, his apathetic taste makes him incline to the side where there is least resistance, though it were the worst side'.

This Mme. de Tencin and her brother, worthy of so little esteem, judged this matter like persons of penetration and intelligence. The same lady, still following her brother's lead, suggested the idea that it would be a useful thing to persuade the King to put himself at the head of his armies : ' Not that between you and me, she added, he has the ability to command a company of grenadiers, but his presence will do much ; the people love their King from habit, and will be charmed to see him take a step which may have been suggested to him. His troops will do their duty better, and the generals will not dare to shirk theirs so openly '. That idea prevailed, thanks to Mme. de Châteauroux, and for a moment made Louis XV a semblance of a hero and the idol of the nation. Mme. de Châteauroux, his mistress for the time being, had some heart ; she felt the generous inspiration and communicated it. She tormented this king who seemed so reluctantly king, by talking to him of State affairs, of his interests, of his glory. ' You are killing me ', he kept repeating. — ' So much the better ! she answered, a king must be born again '. She did indeed resuscitate him, and for a time succeeded in transforming Louis XV into a prince who was sensible to honour and was not recognizable.

We are not so far from Mme. de Pompadour as it might seem. It was that king whom she, whilst still Mme. d'Étioles, lay in wait for whilst he was hunting in the forest of Sénart and whom she began to love. She had vague dreams of Henri IV and Gabrielle d'Estrées. Mme. de Châteauroux having died suddenly, she said to herself that it was for her to take her place. An intrigue was set on foot by her people. The details of it escape us, and what the lampoons have related cannot be a matter of history. But, with that absolute want of initiative which characterized Louis XV, it was necessary to do in the case of Mme. d'Étioles what had been done in the case of Mme. de Châteauroux, that is, the affair had to be *arranged* for him : in a like case, a prince never lacks officious go-betweens. Mme. de Tencin having, as it seems, seen her first

tool broken in Mme. de Châteauroux, thought of replacing her by Mme. d'Étioles, and conspired to that end. The Duc de Richelieu, on the other hand, was opposed to the latter: he had another candidate in view, a grand lady; for it seemed that, in order to become a king's mistress, the first condition was that she should be a lady of quality, and the accession of Mme. Lenormant d'Étioles, of Mlle. Poisson, as the King's official mistress, caused quite a revolution in the traditions of the Court. That was the chief cause of offence: the great shade of Louis XIV was invoked. The Maurepas, the Richelieus revolted at the idea of a bourgeoisie, a *grisette*, as they called her, usurping the power hitherto reserved for girls of noble blood. Maurepas, who was, above all, a satirist, remained in the opposition and for twenty-five years comforted himself with songs. Richelieu, who was a courtier first, made his peace and was reconciled.

The year 1745, that of Fontenoy, was for Mme. d'Étioles also a year of triumph and of great transformations. Her liaison with the King was already *arranged*, and it was only a question of the right moment to publicly announce it. The King was with the army, and she at Étioles. The King wrote her letters after letters; Voltaire, who was with her, and whom she had induced to write a comedy for the Court festivities, on the occasion of the Dauphin's marriage, lent himself to this Henri IV and Gabrielle game, and rhymed madrigals upon madrigals:

Il sait aimer, il sait combattre;
 Il envoie en ce beau séjour
 Un brevet digne d'Henri quatre,
 Signé Louis, Mars et l'Amour.

That was no doubt the patent of the marquiseate. The Abbé de Bernis was also at Étioles at the time: it was said that he was the Marquise's lover, but that is a very doubtful point. 'He knew her little before she had been *arranged* with the King'. It is the Cardinal de Brienne who says so: I like to shelter behind those grave authorities in so delicate a matter. But when the matter had been settled like an affair of State and the King had to leave for the army 'without having yet perhaps obtained anything', they thought of forming the Marquise's intimate society during his absence, and the Abbé de Bernis was selected.

He was faithful to his commission ; he wrote some pretty poetry, all in honour of this royal amour of which he was the confidant and almost the chaplain :

On avait dit que l'Enfant de Cythère
Près du Lignon avait perdu le jour ;
Mais je l'ai vu dans le bois solitaire
Où va rêver la jeune Pompadour.

No doubt that wood was the forest of Sénart, witness of the first interviews. Bernis, faithful to the taste of the day, far from seeing anything reprehensible in this royal amour, describes it beforehand as a model of chastity and *modesty* (*pudeur*), and worthy in every respect of the golden age.¹ The amiable Abbé, who sees no crime except in inconstancy, promises us that there shall be no more of it :

Tout va changer : les crimes d'un volage
Ne seront plus érigés en exploits ;
La *Pudeur* seule obtiendra notre hommage ;
L'Amour *constant* rentrera dans ses droits.
L'exemple en est donné par le plus grand des rois,
Et par la beauté *la plus sage*.

And so the young Pompadour made her entry at Versailles as a *chaste beauty*, whose heart was enamoured solely of a faithful hero.

All this seems strange and almost ridiculous ; but, if we consider the Marquise a little closely, we must admit that there is some truth in this way of looking at it, and that it is quite in accordance with the natural taste of the eighteenth century. Mme. de Pompadour was not exactly a *grisette*, as her enemies affected to say, and as Voltaire said after them one day when he was malicious : she was a bourgeoisie, the flower of the financial world, the prettiest woman in Paris, witty, elegant, adorned with a thousand gifts and a thousand accomplishments, but with a manner of feeling which had not the grandeur and the coldness of an aristocratic ambition. She loved the King for himself,

¹ Speaking of Diane de Poitiers, the Pompadour of her day, a poet of the sixteenth century, Olivier de Magny, said,

Partout où vous allez, et de jour et de nuit,
La *piété*, la *foi*, et la *vertu* vous suit,
La *chasteté*, l'*honneur*. . . .

Those poets have quite a way of their own of looking at things.

as the handsomest man in his kingdom, as the man who had appeared to her the most amiable; she loved him sincerely, sentimentally, if not with a deep passion. Her ideal would have been, on her arrival at Court, to fascinate him, to amuse him with a thousand diversions borrowed from the arts or even intellectual things, to make him happy and constant in a circle of varied enchantments and pleasures. A Watteau landscape, games, comedies, pastorals under the shadow of the trees, a continual embarking for Cythera, that would have been the frame she preferred. But, once transferred to that slippery ground of the Court, she could only very imperfectly realize her ideal. She who was naturally kind and obliging, had to arm herself against enmities and perfidies, to take the offensive in order not to be overthrown; she was led by necessity to politics and to become a minister of State.

Yet, from the beginning (and it is here that I find her faithful to her origins), she carries I know not what bourgeois sentiments, what affections and tastes of private life into the brilliant scandals of her royal liaison. The Memoirs of Mme. du Hausset, her waiting-woman, instruct us on this point, and reveal with great artlessness of gossip the habitual and true sentiments of Mme. de Pompadour: I will mention only one example which will illustrate my idea.

Mme. de Pompadour had had by her husband a daughter, Alexandrine, whom she brought up with extreme care, and intended to be a great match. The King had had by Mme. de Vintimille (sister of Mme. de Châteauroux) a son who was very like him, quite the image of his father. Mme. de Pompadour wished to see this son of the master, contrived to have him brought to Bellevue, where her daughter was, and leading the King into a fig-orchard where the two children were, as if quite by chance, she said, pointing to them: 'They would make a fine pair'. The King remained cold and did not quite enter into the idea. The Bourbon blood in him resisted the attraction of such an alliance, thus proposed. But she, not quite understanding that coolness, said when she thought of it again to Mme. du Hausset:

'If it were Louis XIV, he would make the boy a Duc du Maine; but I do not expect as much: a commission and a Duke's patent for his son is very little; and *it is because he*

is his son, my dear, that I prefer him to all the pretty Dukes at Court. My grandchildren would share in the resemblance to the grandfather and grandmother, and that match which I hope to see would some day make me happy. The tears came to her eyes when she said these words', adds the honest *femme de chambre*.

This wish of Mme. de Pompadour betrays, it seems to me, the perverted but persistent bourgeois vein; she carries ideas of affection and family arrangements even into these adulterous combinations. She is sentimental; she already has the feelings of a tender-hearted grandmother. This scene of the Marquise, showing the two children to the King with tears in her eyes, would have made a picture in what I might call the Greuze-Pompadour style.

It was this side of her character which shocked all the courtiers, who felt like Maurepas, and which made them call her a *grisette*, just by reason of one of her good qualities, so out of place in high quarters. By still some other sides Mme. de Pompadour represents the middle class at Court, and signalizes in a way its accession—a very irregular but a very significant and very real accession.

She loved the arts and intellectual things as none of the mistresses of quality had been able to do. Arrived at that eminent and not very honourable position,—much less honourable than she believed—she regarded it as her destiny at first only to assist, to call to her and encourage merit in suffering and men of talent of every kind. There lies her sole glory, her best title as well as her excuse. She did everything to bring Voltaire forward and to obtain him the favour of Louis XV, whom the petulant poet repelled so strongly by the very vivacity and familiarity of his praises. She thought she saw a genius in Crébillon and honoured him. She favoured Gresset, she protected Marmontel, she welcomed Duclos; she admired Montesquieu and openly showed her admiration. She would have liked to oblige Jean-Jacques Rousseau. When the King of Prussia ostentatiously gave d'Alembert a modest pension, the amount of which (1,200 livres) when contrasted with the expression *sublime genius* which motivated it excited Louis' ridicule, she advised him to forbid the philosopher to accept it and to give him one of double the amount: which Louis did not dare to do from principles of piety,

on account of the *Encyclopædia*. It was not her fault if we cannot speak of the age of Louis XV as we do of the age of Louis XIV. She would have liked to make that little affable and *little giving* king a princely patron of Arts, of Letters, and as liberal as a Valois. 'What was François the First like? she one day asked the Comte de Saint-Germain, who pretended to have lived several centuries; he was a king I should have loved'. But Louis XV could not reconcile himself to the idea of considering men of Letters and wit as of any account, and of admitting them to Court on any footing:

'It is not the fashion in France, said that routine monarch, one day that Frederick's example was mentioned in his presence; and, as we have a few more fine wits and grand lords than there are in Prussia, I should want a very large table to gather them all together'. And then he counted them on his fingers: 'Mauvertuis, Fontenelle, La Motte, Voltaire, Piron, Destouches, Montesquieu, Cardinal de Polignac'. 'Your Majesty forgets d'Alembert and Clairaut', somebody said. 'And Crébillon, he said, and La Chaussée!' 'And Crébillon fils, said somebody, he must be more amiable than his father, and there is besides the Abbé Prévost, the Abbé d'Olivet'. 'Well! said the King, for twenty-five years *all that* would have been dining or supping with me!'

Oh! *all that*, indeed, would have been very much out of their element at Versailles; and yet Mme. de Pompadour would have liked to see them there; she would have liked to see a certain degree of association in public opinion between the monarch and the men who were the glory of his reign. In fact, she was only the most amiable and the prettiest of the philosophers, and not the most inconsequent, who had a place at Court and would have loved to introduce there some of her fellow-philosophers: 'Did you regret Mme. de Pompadour? Voltaire wrote to d'Alembert on hearing of her death. Yes, no doubt; for, at the bottom of her heart, *she was one of us*; she protected Letters to the best of her power: behold the end of a beautiful dream! . . .'

When, to amuse the King, she had comedies acted in the little apartments, Montesquieu appeared to laugh at them in a letter to a friend (November, 1749)¹. 'I have nothing more to tell you, except that Mme. de Pompadour's operas and comedies are about to begin, so that the Duc de La

Vallière will be one of the first men of his century ; and as the talk here is of nothing but comedies and balls, Voltaire is enjoying a particular favour'. But, in the midst of those ballets and operas which Montesquieu sneered at, the details of which are handed down by Laujon, they also acted *Tartufe* ; they played it only two yards from the pious Court of the Dauphin, and the courtiers who had neither a rôle nor a favoured place were not to be comforted.

In the entresol over the Marquise's apartments at Versailles lived Doctor Quesnay, her physician, the patron and founder of the sect of the Economists. He was an eccentric, bluff, honest man, still sincere even at Court, serious *with his ape-like air*, inventing ingenious apologies to cover the truth. Whilst the King was in the Marquise's apartments, whilst the Bernis, the Choiseuls, the ministers and courtiers were governing with her, the Encyclopedists and Economists were talking freely on all sorts of things in Quesnay's entresol, and disposing of the future. The Marquise seems to have felt that storm-clouds were gathering over her head, when she said : *Après moi le déluge !* It was that entresol, filled with ideas and doctrines, that contained all the cataracts of heaven and which must sooner or later break out. There were days on which one might have met there dining together Diderot, d'Alembert, Duclos, Helvétius, Turgot, Buffon, *all that*, as Louis XV said ; ' and Mme. de Pompadour, unable to prevail upon this troop of philosophers to come down to her drawing-room, herself went up to see them at table and talk with them '.

The privacy of letters was then very little observed, and the Superintendent of the Post-Office came regularly every week and brought to the King and Mme. de Pompadour the extracts which had been made from them. When Doctor Quesnay saw him pass, he would fall into such a fury of passion at that *infamous* ministry, as he called it, that he *foamed at the mouth* : ' I would as soon dine with the hangman, he would say, as with the Superintendent of the Post-Office '. These conversations took place in the apartments of the King's mistress, and without any danger, and that went on for twenty years. M. de Marigni, Mme. de Pompadour's brother, a man of merit and worthy of his sister in more than one respect, was con-

tented with saying : ' It is honesty that is finding a vent, and not ill-will '.

One day when this same M. de Marigni was in Quesnay's apartments, the conversation turned to M. de Choiseul :

' He is no better than a dandy, said the Doctor, and if he were prettier, he might have been one of Henri III's minions '. The Marquis de Mirabeau entered (the father of the great tribune) and M. de La Rivière. ' This kingdom is in a very bad way, said Mirabeau ; there are neither vigorous opinions nor money to make them good '. ' It can only be regenerated by a conquest as in China, or by some great inner upheaval ; but woe to those who are there ! the French people can strike hard '. These words made me tremble, adds the good Mme. du Hausset, who hands down the story, and I hastened to leave the room. M. de Marigni did the same, without appearing to be affected by what was said '.

Bring these prophetic words together with those which escaped Louis XV himself on the subject of the resistance of Parliament : ' Things will go on as they are as long as I live '. That was the end of his world.

Did Mme. de Pompadour contribute as much as has been asserted to this ruin of the monarchy ? No doubt she did not prevent it. However, given the character of Louis XV, to fall into the hands of a woman ' born sincere, who loved him for himself, and who had justness in her mind and justice in her heart, was perhaps the best thing that could have happened to that King ; a woman like that is not met with every day '. Such, at least, was Voltaire's judgment of Mme. de Pompadour after her death. She had some good in her, the species being admitted.

Louis XV, so contemptible in character, was not devoid of wit nor good sense. Many happy sayings of his have been quoted, piquant and shrewd enough repartees, such as not infrequently came from the princes of the house of Bourbon. He seems to have had a good measure of judgment, if that expression is not too elevated to designate the kind of immobility and idleness in which he liked to keep his mind ; but it was necessary for him above all to be governed. He was a Louis XIII re-appearing in the eighteenth century, with the vices of his own time, as weak, as mean-spirited and much less chaste than his ancestor, and who did not meet with his Richelieu.

He could have found him only in a beautiful woman, and such coincidences as that of the genius of a Richelieu in the body of a Pompadour are not perhaps within the order of possible human things. However, the time came when Mme. de Pompadour understood that as a mistress she was used up, that she could no longer retain or amuse the King on that footing only; she felt that there was only one sure means of maintaining her position, that was to become the necessary friend and minister, who would relieve the King of the necessity of exercising his will in State affairs. She almost became then that necessary friend¹; she forced her nature, more adapted for the government of little cabinets and little amusements. Here mythology ceases, and history begins, not a very noble history! When she had had MM. d'Argenson and de Machault dismissed, she governed conjointly with M. de Bernis and M. de Choiseul. It was then that one saw the political system of Europe overthrown, the old alliances of France inverted, and quite a succession of events at the mercy of the inclinations, the antipathies and the too frail and too personal good sense of an amiable woman.

One also saw then the strangest sight, the heroic and cynical King of Prussia in conflict with three women, three *Sovereigns* intent upon his ruin, all three of whom he had forcible names for—the Empress Elizabeth of Russia, the Empress Maria Theresa and Mme. de Pompadour—and getting out of their clutches like a man who is accustomed neither to love nor to fear the sex; and, on the other side, Louis XV naïvely saying of that King, whose ally he had

¹ Bernis, Minister of State, wrote to Choiseul, then Ambassador, on January 20, 1757, shortly after the attempted assassination by Damiens, which had opened the field to so many intrigues against the favourite: 'The King has been assassinated, and the Court has seen in this frightful event only a favourable opportunity for getting rid of our friend. All the intrigues have been evolved in presence of the confessor. There is a tribe at Court who are always awaiting the extreme unction to try to increase their influence. Why should piety and virtue be so widely separated? Our friend can no longer scandalize any but fools and rogues: it is a matter of public notoriety that for the last five years, friendship has taken the place of gallantry. It is real bigotry to go back to the past to asperse the innocence of the actual liaison: it is founded on the necessity of opening his mind to a reliable and proved friend, who, in a divided ministry, is the only point of union. . . . How many ungrateful wretches I have seen, and how corrupt our age is! There has never perhaps been (much) more virtue in the world, but there has been more honour'.

failed to become, and by whom he had so often been humbled and beaten: 'He is a madman who will risk all for all, and who can win the game, though he is without religion, without morals and principles'. The amusing point is that Louis XV thought he had more morals and principles than Frederick, and he had indeed rather more since he believed it.

Beaten in foreign affairs, for want of a hero, in her duel with Frederick, Mme. de Pompadour was personally more fortunate in internal affairs, in her war to the death against the Jesuits. At one moment she had offered them peace; contrary to their custom they refused her advances. She was a woman, a woman of wit and mistress of the situation; she took her revenge. On this occasion she did all the injury possible to those who tried to injure her. Recent publications have thrown a strong light on that interesting point.¹

In Mme. de Pompadour's career and influence there were then two distinct epochs: the first, the most brilliant and the most favoured, was on the morrow of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748): there she confined herself entirely to her rôle of a young mistress, enamoured of peace, the arts, the pleasures of the mind, counselling and protecting all happy things. There was a second very mixed epoch, most often disastrous and fatal: that was the whole period of the Seven Years' War, the period of Damiens' attempt, of the defeat of Rosbach and Frederick's triumphant insults. Those were hard years, which prematurely aged that weak and gracious woman, drawn into a conflict too hard for her. In order to have the precise measure of the faults committed by each at this date, we must await the publication, which should not be deferred much longer, of all the diplomatic documents relative to the ministry of Cardinal de Bernis and the Duc de Choiseul. So far I will readily content myself with the historic outlines of Duclos on the causes and disasters of that war of 1756. My impression, however, the result of a bare view at this distance, is that matters might have turned out worse, and that Mme. de Pompadour, aided by M. de Choiseul, by means of the conclusion of the family Pact,

¹ See the *Histoire de la Chute des Jésuites au XVIIIe siècle*, by Comte Alexis de Saint-Priest.

still covered with some prestige her own mistakes and the humiliation of the monarchy and of France.

The nation itself seems to have felt this, and to have felt above all that after this brilliant favourite the country would fall very low; for, when she died at Versailles, on April 15, 1764, there was universal mourning among that population of Paris who would have stoned her a few years before. Mme. de La Tour-Tranqueville, a not unreliable witness, wrote to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (May 6) :

‘ The weather has been so terrible all the past month, that Mme. de Pompadour must have had the less regret to leave this life. She proved in her last moments that her mind was a compound of strength and weakness, a mixture which will never surprise me in a woman. Nor am I surprised to see that she is as generally mourned as she was generally despised or hated. The French are the first people in the world for everything; it is quite natural that they should be the first for inconsistency’.

Among those who appeared to mourn her least was Louis XV; it is told that, looking out of a window at the coffin as it was being transported from the Castle of Versailles to Paris, he merely said, alluding to the terrible weather: ‘ The Marquise will not have fine weather for her journey’. His ancestor Louis XIII had said at the time of the execution of the favourite Cinq-Mars: ‘ *Dear friend* must be making an ugly face now’. Compared with the words of Louis XIII, those of his descendant are almost touching in their sensibility.

The arts grievously felt the loss of Mme. de Pompadour, and perpetuated her memory; for a moment they had hoped that she would recover, and only showed themselves grateful. If Voltaire, writing about her to his friends, said: *She was one of us*, with greater reason were the artists entitled to say so. Mme. de Pompadour was herself a distinguished artist. Directly, and through her brother M. de Marigni, whom she had had appointed to the office of Superintendent of Buildings, she exercised the most active and happy influence. At no period was art more living, more in touch with society, which found expression in it and copied it on all hands.¹

¹ On this chapter of the art and the artists of the eighteenth century

Writing his account of the Salon of 1765, Diderot first came across an allegorical picture, on which Carle Vanloo represented the Arts grieved and supplicating, imploring Destiny to prolong the life of the Marquise: 'She did indeed protect them, says the critic; she loved Carle Vanloo; she was a benefactress to Cochin; the engraver Gai had his wheel in her apartments. Too happy the nation if she had confined her activities to amusing the sovereign, to giving orders for pictures and statues'! And after describing the picture, he concludes rather harshly, it seems to me:

'Vanloo's Suppliants obtained nothing of Destiny, who is more favourable to France than to the Arts. Mme. de Pompadour died at the moment when she was thought to be out of danger. Well! what remains of this woman who has drained us of men and money, left us without honour and without strength, and has overthrown the political system of Europe? The Treaty of Versailles, which will last as long as it may; Bouchardon's *Cupid*, which will be admired for ever; a few stones engraved by Gai, which will astonish the antiquaries to come; a good little picture of Vanloo, which will be occasionally looked at; and a handful of ashes!'

There will remain a few more things, and posterity, or at least the amateurs who represent it to-day, seem to accord to Mme. de Pompadour's influence, and to range under her name more objects worthy of attention than even Diderot enumerated. I will rapidly point out a few of them.

Mme. de Pompadour had a fine library, especially rich in drama, a library largely composed of French books, that is to say, books that she read, most of them bound with her arms (three towers), and sometimes with the sides ornamented with wide lace-work. These volumes are still in demand, and the bibliophiles give to herself a chosen place in their golden book, beside the most illustrious connoisseurs whose names are held in memory. She carried the love of art so far as to *print* with her own hands, at Versailles, one of Corneille's tragedies,

from the point of view of the *Pompadour* taste, I can only recall a number of graceful literary portraits of M. Arsène Houssaye, who has long made that smiling study his province. From this moment I know that I am shooting, as it were, on his preserves; but I do not do so without his consent.

Rodogune (1760) : the edition consisted of only a score of copies. It may be said that those are only singularities ; but they testify to the taste and passion for Letters in this woman ' who would have loved François I '.

In the Gallery of Prints there is a Collection entitled the *Work* (Collection of Engravings) of *Mme. de Pompadour*, consisting of sixty prints or engravings in aquafortis. These are for the most part allegorical subjects intended to celebrate some memorable events of the time : but there are some which agree more with the idea called up by the amiable artist : *Cupid cultivating a myrtle*, *Cupid cultivating laurels*. As a rule we find Cupids in all sorts of guises, and even *Military Genius* is represented as a Cupid meditating before banners and cannons. Not content with thus reproducing in copper etchings Gai's cuttings on precious stones, she appears to have engraved herself on gems (agate or cornelian). Her etchings, by the way, were retouched with the burin. In short, she applied her hand, her pretty hand, to this work, as she did to the printing of a book ; she is one of the craft and, just as the bibliophiles inscribe her name on their list and the topographers on theirs, so also the engravers are entitled to include within their ranks, as a colleague, *Mme. de Pompadour, Linographer in aquafortis (etcher)*.

The Manufactory at Sèvres owes her much ; she actively protected it ; she often took the King there, who, in this case, was sensible of the importance of an art to which he owed many magnificent table services, worthy to be offered as presents to sovereigns. Under the near influence of Versailles, Sèvres soon had original marvels to rival those of Old Saxony and Japan. Nowhere does the so-called *Pompadour* style shine with greater delicacy and fantasy, and more in its right place, than in the porcelain services of that time. This glory, due to a fragile art, is more durable than many others.

While M. de Marigni, her brother, called Souflot from Lyons to intrust to him the building of the Church of Sainte-Généviève (the Pantheon), she was keenly interested and contributed her share in the establishment of the Military School. Among the very small number of authentic letters of hers which have survived, there are two which give valuable details on the subject. In one,

written to a friend, the Comtesse de Lutzelbourg, she says (January 3, 1751) :

' I think that you will be very pleased with the edict which the King has issued for the ennobling of officers. You will be more pleased still with that which is about to appear for the Establishment of five hundred gentlemen whom His Majesty is going to have brought up in the military art. This Royal School will be built near the Invalides. The Establishment is all the finer, because His Majesty has been working at it for a year and his ministers have no share in the work, and did not know of it before he had had everything arranged according to his fancy, which was after the journey to Fontainebleau. I will send you the Edict as soon as it is printed '.

If the King thought of it alone and without his ministers, there is no doubt that he owed the inspiration to Mme. de Pompadour, for he was not the man to originate ideas of that kind. Another quite familiar letter of Mme. de Pompadour, written to Paris-Duverney, who had first suggested the idea to her, shows her carrying out with solicitude the noble plan :

' August 15, 1755.

' No, certainly, my dear *booby*, I will not allow an institution to be wrecked in port which is to immortalize the King, make his nobility happy, and make known to posterity my attachment to the State and the person of His Majesty. I told Gabriel to-day to make his arrangements for sending to Grenelle the workmen required for finishing the business. My income for this year has not yet been paid ; I shall lay out the whole of it in paying the workmen's fortnights. I know not whether I shall find my securities for the payment, but I know very well that I shall risk, with great satisfaction, a hundred thousand lives for the happiness of those poor boys. Good-night, dear *booby*, etc.'

If the tone perhaps appears a little bourgeois, the action is a royal one.

All the chief painters of the French School of the time painted Mme. de Pompadour's portrait : we have that of Boucher, that of Drouais which Grimm preferred to all the others ; but the most admirable is certainly La Tour's pastel, which is in the Museum. Thither one should go to see the Marquise before presuming to judge her and form the smallest idea of her person.

She is represented sitting in an arm-chair, holding a

music-book in her hand, her left arm resting on a marble table on which are a globe and several books. The biggest of the volumes, which touches the globe, is the fourth volume of the *Encyclopædia* ; beside it are ranged a volume of the *Esprit des Lois*, *La Henriade* and the *Pastor fido*, testifying to the tastes, both serious and tender, of the queen of the place. On the table, at the foot of the globe, lies upside down another volume, bound in blue, with the lettering on the back : *Engraved Stones* ; that is her *work*. A print hangs loose, representing a gem engraver at work with these words : *Pompadour sculpsit*. On the floor, at the foot of the table, is a portfolio of engravings and drawings, marked with her arms ; there we have quite a trophy. In the background, between the feet of the pier-table, we have a glimpse of a Japanese porcelain vase : why not Sèvres ? Behind her arm-chair, on the site opposite the table, is another arm-chair or ottoman with a guitar. But it is the person herself who is quite a marvel of delicacy, suave dignity and exquisite beauty. Carelessly holding the music-book in her hand, her attention is suddenly taken from it ; she seems to have heard a noise and is turning her head. Was it the King who was about to enter ? She appears to be expecting with certainty and listening with a smile. The turning of the head shows the profile of the neck in all its grace, and her very short and deliciously wavy hair, with the locks rising one above the other, the fairness of which is divined under the half-powder which hardly covers it. The head floats in a light-blue background, which is the prevailing background of the whole picture. The eye is throughout satisfied and flattered ; it is melody rather than harmony. A sifted bluish light falls from above and glides over all the objects. There is nothing in this enchanted boudoir but seems to pay its court to the goddess, nothing, not even the *Esprit des Lois* and the *Encyclopédie*. The flowered satin dress leaves room in the indentation at the bosom for several rows of those knots which are called, I think, *parfaits contentements*, of a very pale lilac colour. Her own flesh and complexion is a white lilac, lightly azured. That bosom, those ribbons, that dress, all that ensemble is harmoniously or rather amorously wedded. Beauty shines in all its brilliancy and its expanded flower. The face is still young, the temples have preserved their youth

and freshness ; the lips too are fresh and not yet wrinkled, as they are said to have become from too much pursing and biting, when swallowing her anger and insults. The whole physiognomy and attitude express a charm, a supreme taste, affability and amenity rather than sweetness, a queenly air which she had to adopt, but which is natural and is sustained without too much effort. I might go on and describe many pretty details, I prefer to stop and refer the curious to the portrait : they will see many things that I do not presume to touch upon.

Such was in her best days this ravishing, ambitious, frail woman, who was sincere, however, who remained good in her exalted position, faithful (I like to think so) in her fault, helpful to the best of her power, vindictive, however, if she was driven to it, after all very much of a woman, whom her attendant was able, in short, to describe in intimacy, without being too embarrassing or overwhelming a witness. This book of Mme. du Hausset leaves a singular impression ; it is written with a sort of naïveté and ingenuousness which kept itself honest enough in spite of contact with vice : ' There you have the Court, all is corrupt, high and low ', I said one day to my lady, who was telling me of some facts that I knew. ' I could tell thee many more things, she added ; but the little room in which you are standing often tells you enough '. After the first moment of rairy enchantment and dazzlement was past, Mme. de Pompadour judged her situation in its reality, and, though she loved the King, she preserved no illusion with respect to his character or the sort of affection of which she was the object. She felt that for him she was only a habit and nothing more. ' It is our staircase that the King loves, said the little Maréchale de Mirepoix to her ; he is accustomed to go up and down it. But, if he found another woman to whom he could talk of his chase and his affairs, it would be all the same to him after three days '. She repeated these words to herself as the exact and melancholy truth. She had everything to fear at every moment, for, with such a man *everything was possible* ; even a smile from him or a more or less gracious mien would prove nothing : ' You do not know him, my dear, she said one day to Mme. du Hausset, with whom she was talking of I know not what rival whom they had tried to set up against her ; if he were to

settle her in my apartments this evening, he would treat her coldly before the world, and would treat me with the greatest friendliness'. That cunning was the result of his early bringing up under the old Cardinal de Fleury. In short, she exclaims with a secret feeling of her misery and an expression which is nevertheless surprising: "Ah! my life is like that of the Christian, a perpetual combat. It was not thus with the women who had gained the good graces of Louis XIV . . ."

In spite of all, she was indeed the mistress whom the reign wanted, the only one who could succeed in turning it to account in the direction of public opinion, the only one who was able to diminish the crying discord between the least literary of kings and the most literary of epochs. If the Abbé Galiani, openly expressing on a curious page his preference for the age of Louis XV over that of Louis XIV, was able to say of that age of the human intellect, so fruitful in results: 'There will not be a reign like it for a long time', Mme. de Pompadour certainly contributed her share to it. That gracious woman rejuvenated the Court, by bringing to it the vivacity of her very French, her Parisian tastes. As the Prince's mistress and friend, as protectress of the arts, her mind was quite equal to her rôle and her rank: as a politician she failed, she did mischief, but not more mischief perhaps than any other favourite would have done in her place at that period, when we lacked a real statesman.

When she saw that she was dying after reigning for nineteen years, when, at the age of forty-two, she had to leave those palaces, that wealth, those accumulated wonders of art, that power so envied, so disputed, but which she kept entire in her hands to the last day, she did not say, like Mazarin, with a sigh: 'I must leave all this!' She looked death in the face with a firm eye, and, as the curé of the Madeleine who had come to see her at Versailles was going back, she said: 'Wait a moment, Monsieur le Curé, we will go together'.

Mme. de Pompadour may be regarded as the last in date of kings' mistresses, who are worthy of that name: after her, it would be impossible to descend and enter decently into the History of the Du Barry. The kings and emperors who have succeeded in France from that time to our days have been either too virtuous, or too

despotic, or too gouty, or too repentant, or too pater-familias, to permit themselves those superfluities: we have only seen a few traces of them at the most. The race of kings' mistresses may be said then to have, if not ended, at least been very interrupted, and Mme. de Pompadour remains in our eyes the last in evidence in our history and the most brilliant.

M. DE MALESHERBES

Monday and Tuesday, September 23 and 24, 1850.

IN a Collection of *Discours et Rapports lus aux séances de l'Académie française* (1840-1849), which has just appeared, I renew acquaintance with an excellent piece of writing on M. de Malesherbes. M. de Malesherbes was a member of the French Academy; he was unanimously elected in 1775. In 1830 the Academy offered a prize for his Eulogy, and M. Bazin gained it. But at the same time it commissioned one of its most eminent members, M. Dupin, to speak more fully, and with all authority, of this great magistrate and citizen, rendered sublime by his devotion and death. After so many eulogies and panegyrics, the theme might seem to be exhausted. M. Dupin, in accordance with his mental habits, took a virile and sensible view of him, with a sort of resolution in his glance: seizing upon a few objections directed against Malesherbes' first ideas, he not only praised, he discussed. Comparing the political and philosophical doctrines long professed by that great and good man, with the social reforms which have been since realized, he derived from the comparison some just and new views. I will now seize the opportunity myself of saying something upon a subject which honours all who touch upon it.

Chrétien-Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes, the heir of so noble a name, which he was to render nobler by his life and sacred by his death, was born on December 6, 1721. Educated by the Jesuits, from whom he got only his taste for Letters, initiated in the law by the celebrated Jansenist councillor, the Abbé Pucelle, from whom he got only his integrity and his learning, he early belonged to his century by reason of a certain intellectual freedom not known in the preceding age, which at least did not

exist by common sanction. Sprung from a good stock, he had in him treasures of health, of probity, of intellectual and moral power, which he incessantly and assiduously drew upon and did not allow to go to waste. He extended his studies in all directions simultaneously. The first functions he exercised in the magistracy (Deputy of the Procureur-général, then Councillor of the Court of Inquiries) left him leisure to devote active attention to literature and the sciences, especially the natural sciences, which he passionately loved. In agronomy, in botany, he was more than an amateur, and proved himself one of the profession. Nature had not granted him the elegancies and graces of youth, nor with any desire to acquire them or make them good : it was time gained for more serious things. There is a story that the famous dancing-master Marcel, so well known for his solemn aphorisms, one day asked an audience of M. de Lamoignon the elder to inform him that he could not conscientiously disguise the fact that his son would never dance well, and could not consequently make his way either in the law or in the army : ' To see him walk, he concluded, you can only reasonably put him into the Church '. M. de Malesherbes used to delight in telling this doleful prediction of Marcel.

M. de Lamoignon the elder having been appointed Chancellor of France, in 1750, Malesherbes succeeded him as First President of the Court of Aids ; from this time he belongs to the great functions, and his public life commences. He was twenty-nine years of age.

It is very probable that, but for that circumstance, and if he had been kept back a few years in his judicial career, he would have entered the literary life by the publication of some work ; for, in each order of studies, he was fond of keeping a written record of his thoughts. At the time when he became First President, he was very much occupied with Buffon's *Natural History*, the three first volumes of which had just then appeared (1749), and he applied himself to pointing out, pen in hand, its slight faults and inaccuracies, principally in matters of botany, which Malesherbes knew so well, and of which Buffon knew little. The young Malesherbes is not afraid of dealing sharply with Buffon, who has recently become celebrated, but is not yet established : ' M. de Buffon,

he says, who has not long devoted himself to the study of nature'. He vindicates Gesner, Linné, Bernard de Jussieu, all the great botanists whom Buffon had treated a little disdainfully and almost tried to *dishonour* by comparing them with alchemists, forgetting 'that botany constitutes a third part of natural history by reason of its object and more than half by the number of its works'. Speaking somewhere of a pregnant remark of the great naturalist Gesner, Buffon said of the man who made it: '*I think it was Gesner*'.—'Now the whole of modern botany is based upon Gesner's discovery, observes Malesherbes. What should we think of a man who, publishing some Reflections on the French Stage, should say: *At such and such a time there appeared a tragi-comedy entitled I.e Cid, which was, I THINK, by Pierre Corneille*'? In reading Malesherbes' Observations, which remained unpublished during his lifetime and did not appear till 1798, he impresses us throughout as a modest, well-informed man, who is on his own ground and only defends it as in duty bound, in dealing rather sharply with the superior man, who casts a general glance around and dogmatizes. These criticisms display a strong, judicious mind, *supremely upright*, as M. Flourens says, a spirit befitting the sciences of observation; their style is full, natural, healthy, indifferently elegant, but often witty from its good sense: that is one of the features which characterize Malesherbes. Later, in his Reception Address at the Academy, Malesherbes will praise Buffon in his presence, but he had begun by criticizing him.

Malesherbes' public career began, as we have seen, in 1750, and, from this moment, he ought, if we wish to fittingly follow and study his life, to be considered from several aspects and under several headings. At the same time that he became President of the Court of Aids, he was charged by the Chancellor his father with a most delicate office of trust, that of Director of the Publishing Trade. Now, at a time when no book could be printed in France without explicit or tacit permission, and in the very middle of the eighteenth century, we may judge of the importance of such an office, that Malesherbes filled for thirteen years (1750-1763).

As First President of the Court of Aids, Malesherbes' career should require a whole chapter; he followed the

line of conduct of the most courageous and most independent men of the old French judicial bench, signalized himself by some vigorous Remonstrances which concerned the great interests of the nation, aimed in all things at sound equity, and, if he met with popularity on that way, at least he never sacrificed to it.

Banished in 1771, in consequence of some memorable Remonstrances, he reappeared at the head of his Company at the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI, and became a Minister of that virtuous prince in 1775, in that first reforming ministry of which Turgot was a member. Malesherbes, however, did not remain long and was soon disheartened. 'In Malesherbes the minister, says a historian very worthy of understanding him (M. Droz), we still see the honest man, but we no longer find the intrepid magistrate'. Like so many men of his race and his form of character, Malesherbes was entirely great and intrepid only *on the fleurs-de-lis*, and awaiting the day when he was so great in presence of the scaffold.

In 1787 Malesherbes again for a short time entered the King's Council, under the ministry of M. de Brienne; but he had no portfolio, he had little influence, and had no success except that of deciding the civil emancipation of the Protestants. Events hastened on every day at the bidding of passions and intrigues. It seemed as if, on his retiring at that time, and devoting his attentions henceforth solely to agricultural pursuits in his beautiful gardens at Malesherbes, this noble and dignified old man of nearly seventy had finally closed his career. If he had died at this epoch, he would have left a reputation as one of the most virtuous and most enlightened men of his time. His funeral oration would still have been a fine one; it might have been summed up in the following words of a foreigner of great merit (Lord Shelburne, afterwards Marquis of Lansdowne), written after a visit to him a few years before :

'I have seen what I had previously considered could not possibly exist, *a man, absolutely free from fear and hope alike, yet full of life and warmth.* Nothing in the world can disturb his repose; *he lacks nothing himself and interests himself actively in everything good.* I have never been so profoundly struck by any one in the course of my travels, and I feel sure that if I ever accomplish anything great in what remains of

my life, I shall do so encouraged by my recollection of M. de Malesherbes'.

That seems to have been for a good man a high destiny already entirely fulfilled and consummated ; but, for the edification of humanity and his own glory, M. de Malesherbes was fated to gain something more. The opportunity, which reveals our whole being to others and to ourselves, sought him in the civil storm and found him quite prepared ; he saw him whom he had called his master, alone, defenceless, in a prison, and he went to him with open arms. He had already anticipated this. When travelling in Switzerland in the summer of 1792, at the epoch, I think, of June 20, he said one morning to one of his kinswomen (the Marquise Daguesseau), who was staying at Lausanne and whom he used to visit every day : ' I am off to Paris '. ' Why that ? ' ' Things are becoming more serious ; I am going to my post ; the King might have need of me '. I wanted to quote these words to show that there was premeditation or at least prevision in his devotion. M. de Malesherbes returned ; the rest is well known. In defending Louis XVI, whom he soon followed in his turn with his family to the scaffold, M. de Malesherbes has set one of the greatest examples of goodness and moral greatness : such victims are more calculated to raise human nature than their executioners are to degrade it.

Obliged to choose between so many aspects that the life of M. de Malesherbes offers, I will take one on which I have been enabled to gather valuable and confidential information : I mean his administration as Director of the Publishing Trade during thirteen years. The most important documents, the principal manuscript papers relating to this part of his life and conduct are before my eyes, and I shall be able to deal with them, not with more justice and fairness (for most of his biographers have, as a rule, spoken very well about him), but with more precision than has been done hitherto.

In 1750, then, the Chancellor de Lamoignon charged his son with the superintendence of the bookselling and publishing trade, an office which the Chancellor at that time had the power of conferring. M. de Malesherbes was an enlightened man, as I have said, and that according to modern lights ; he would have desired a freedom of the

press, and had little belief in the efficacy of the Censure, when public opinion has once taken its flight in a certain direction. And in spite of all this, there we see him placed at the head of that Censure, and invested with the most delicate of functions, faced on the one hand by a very emancipated philosophical literature, with which he shares more than one doctrine, on the other by a very irritated religious and reactionary opposition, with supporters at Court at the side of the Queen and the Dauphin, and again by the Parliament, with its prejudices and pretensions, which in many cases would like to have the judging of books and authors transferred to itself. The office of the Director of the Publishing Trade consisted, when a book was submitted to him (and all were supposed to be), in appointing a censor ; on the approval of this censor, which was sometimes public and at other times tacit, the printing of the work was permitted, but not in the majority of cases without having been submitted to some corrections. Strictly speaking, however, even after the publication of the book, and notwithstanding this preliminary censure, followed by approval, prosecution could still take place, either by a Decree of the King's Council, or by authority of Parliament. Lastly there was always time to interpose with a *lettre de cachet* (royal order), which sent the author to the Bastille. We see the complication and the maze. Malesherbes, who was besides First President of the Court of Aids, could only have consented to fulfil so arbitrary a mission, in which the jurisdiction was so ill defined and the responsibility so perilous, to oblige his father, and also in the interest of literature and science, which he loved so strongly, and to which he might be serviceable.

It was impossible for him to satisfy everybody, or rather it was impossible for him to help displeasing almost everybody.

On ne peut contenter tout le monde et son père,

he learned this fact in his administration and must very often have thought so to himself ; and yet, on the morrow of his resignation he was universally regretted by all the men of Letters.

The Director of the Publishing Trade became, by his position, the confidant and sometimes the target of

everybody's unsatisfied or irritated self-esteem; the self-esteem of men of the world, of *grands seigneurs*, of bigots, especially of the men of Letters, he had to deal with all together or with each by turns, and he could tell more tales than any man of their secret idiosyncrasies and their weaknesses. Some of these vanities spoke in the name of religion and morality; some others (and they were not the least bitter) put themselves forward in the name of taste:

'I have heard it seriously said, he remarked, that it is contrary to good order to allow anybody to print that *Italian music is the only good music*. . . .

'I know judges who regard it as a mistake to allow the printing of elementary books on jurisprudence, and who declare that those books diminish the number of real scholars.

'Most physicians would like to see books in the vulgar language on medicine forbidden.

'Almost all those who have taken part in public affairs dislike seeing anything written on politics, commerce or legislation.

'Men of Letters think the same with regard to literary criticism; they dare not propose that it should be entirely prohibited, but their sensitiveness on that point is so great, that if we considered them as much as they desire, criticism would be reduced to the vanishing point'.

In the *Memoranda* published by him *On the Publishing Trade and the Liberty of the Press*, M. de Malesherbes frequently, and with piquant reason, returns to these differences and contradictions of the innumerable forms of self-esteem. His observations would have offered material for a clever Satire in the style of Horace; he confined himself to extracting from them a few principles of equity and good administration.

The present is not a very favourable time for appreciating the advantages of a free press. These advantages are wide-spread and scattered so to say over a combination of imperceptible general effects which are bound up with the control of publicity and all the ills that it prevents: on the other hand, the drawbacks of a free press are direct and very perceptible; they concern and affect everybody. Society has been afraid, and, after settling down again, it has not become very reasonable on this matter of the press. The writers

themselves have become more and more exacting. To find on both hands some correctness of appreciation and lucidity of view, it will not be amiss to go back in imagination to the times of M. de Malesherbes and to follow him in some of the thousand contentious affairs he had to unravel. We shall appreciate the difference of régimes at a hundred years' distance. Society will see that it has no reasonable cause to regret anything or to see itself back in those good old times, and the writers will see too that they have not too much ground of complaining of the present day. Let us then open and peruse together some of the documents relating to the publishing of books during the administration of M. de Malesherbes.

In 1758, Hêlvétius desired to publish his book *De l'Esprit*, a poor, superficial work, indecent in many places, and more calculated to shock a true philosopher than a bishop. M. de Malesherbes had fixed on M. Tercier to examine the book, a clerk in the Foreign Office, a man of the world, who saw no great mischief in the book and gave his permit. The book had already appeared when M. de Malesherbes was apprised of the scandal both by one of his subordinates and by the public clamour. He immediately stopped the sale; his first idea was to have it examined anew by another censor. 'Sir, wrote Hêlvétius to him, I am penetrated with your goodness; I still count upon your friendship: I hope that you will not have me put into the hands of a ridiculous theologian'. As if his wishes could be considered, indeed, or his fine protestations, when he exclaimed: 'I was animated, when writing my book, solely by the desire to be serviceable to humanity, as much as a writer can possibly be'. The matter had assumed alarming proportions. Parliament interfered, and, on the public outcry, intended to take the affair into its own hands, by arrogating to itself the right of judging the book, and so encroaching upon the Chancellor's jurisdiction. The King's Council hastened to anticipate the Parliament's prosecution, by a Decree of August 10, 1758, which revoked the letters of privilege and suppressed the work. M. de Malesherbes, with his natural goodness, then found himself in the most painful situation, obliged to reserve and assert his father's

rights, to negotiate with Parliament, who paid no heed to him and issued its Decree, to reassure and advise his friend Helvétius whilst punishing him, and lastly to punish the poor censor Tercier, who was being demanded on all hands as a victim, though he had only blundered. It was necessary to reconcile all these official duties with the moral goodness and the natural fairness which he was not the man to depart from. Thereupon Mme. Helvétius wrote to him, earnestly entreating him to prohibit the ecclesiastical journals from joining the attack by criticizing her husband's book ; but Malesherbes was as much in favour of the freedom of the press as it was possible to be and had no mind, in any case, to put obstacles in the way of literary criticism. And in this case he could do so less than ever ; for he was himself indirectly blamed and rather left in the lurch by his father, 'in whom respect for the religion which was said to be offended prevailed over every other consideration'.

The sensation produced by this affair of Helvétius' *De l'Esprit*, the false position in which it placed so many eminent persons, and the conflict of jurisdictions which it openly gave rise to, suggested for a moment the drawing up of a law to decide the matter, a law that it was better that the King should make, than that it should be left to Parliament ; on this occasion it was that M. de Malesherbes set about writing his interesting *Mémoires sur la Librairie*.

A second affair in which we find M. de Malesherbes in difficulties, not with Parliament and the Chancellor, but with the authors, is that of Voltaire's *Écossaise*. In this comedy, Voltaire had taken Fréron off on the stage, thinly disguised under the name *Frélon* (Wasp), and he made him play the most despicable part. Fréron wished to review, in his journal *L'Année littéraire*, the comedy in which he had been insulted, and to take his revenge ; it was hard to offer any objection. The censor appointed by M. de Malesherbes (Coqueley de Chaussepierre) at first put all sorts of difficulties in the critic's way. In the first moment Fréron had indulged in coarse reprisals, personalities and insults : the whole contained in a rather witty account which he entitled *Relation d'une grande Bataille*, meaning the performance at the

Comédie-Française (July 26, 1760). But the censor struck out everything. Fréron, beside himself, wrote to this censor whom he did not know by name; as a last resort he turned to M. de Malesherbes:

'Surely the least thing I can do is to reply by a gay trifle to a man who calls me *fripon, coquin, impudent*. . . . I have recourse to your fairness, Sir; every day a hundred enormities are printed in Paris; I flatter myself that you will be pleased to permit me this little jest. The work entailed by my *Année littéraire* does not permit me to write little detached pamphlets; the labour takes up all my attention and leaves me no time to do anything else. My papers are my stage, my battlefield; there I await my enemies and there I must repel their blows'.

M. de Malesherbes was of opinion that, on this occasion, Fréron should be given some licence; only the most direct personalities were struck out. 'We must follow a rule,' wrote Malesherbes to the censor, 'although we have departed a little from it in the case of the *Bataille*, because, at that time, poor Fréron was in a critical state which demanded some indulgence'. Now you should read, if you like, in the *Année littéraire* (1760, vol. v, p. 209), the *Relation d'une grande Bataille*. Thanks to the difficulties which the Censure put in his way, Fréron, obliged to restrain himself and substitute allusion for insult, really acquired some wit and smartness, more than he usually allowed himself. It is one of his best articles, the best perhaps; it is almost equal to Janin, with more sobriety. He characterizes under slightly travestied names, as in the battle in Boileau's *Lutrin*, the principal leaders of the philosophical army, Diderot and his aide-de-camp Sédaine, Grimm, Marmontel, and the others in their suite: they were all recognized at the time under their transparent mask.¹ No sooner

¹ For those who would like to search these pages of Fréron, I will here supply a little key which will facilitate their reading. The *savetier Blaise* (cobbler Blaise), who plays the devil (*fait le Diable à quatre*) is Sédaine, the author of comic operas known under those titles.—The redoubtable *Dortidius*, the generalissimo who commands the centre in person, is Diderot; the little *Prophet* and the *Calchas*, Grimm;—the usurper of the little kingdom of *Angola*, the Chevalier de La Morlière.—The *abbé Micromégas* is the Chevalier Méhégan, who had a bone to pick with Fréron.—The little *Pres-tolet*, who is abused as a deserter, is the Abbé de La Porte, once a collaborator, then a rival of Fréron with his *Observateur littéraire*.—*Mercur*e exiled from Olympus, is Marmontel, who had been deprived of his licence

was the battle won at the Comédie-Française, when the heated victors hastened to the Tuileries, where the most influential and the most sedate members of the philosophical Senate were awaiting them, the sage *Tacite* (d'Alembert), the prudent *Théophraste* (Duclos). There is a ball in the evening, the fronts of all the mansions of the philosophers are illuminated, and the whole ends on the morrow with a solemn *Te Deum*—I beg pardon, I mean a *Te Voltarium*! Fréron had great difficulty in rescuing this *Te Voltarium* from the claws of the censor; that tiresome man declared that it would be taken as an indecent parody and profanity. Fréron was again obliged to refer to M. de Malesherbes; it was his final pleasantry, his shaft, his point; he was more anxious to retain it than anything else:

'So, he wrote, I entreat you as a favour, Sir, to let it pass. The whole of my article was written to bring in this point, and I am lost if you suppress it. I entreat you, Sir, to grant me this favour. It is not imagination when I have the honour of telling you, Sir, that I have read the *Te Voltarium* to two bishops; nothing is more certain and more true. I shall have the honour of naming them when I have that of seeing you; they only laughed at it'.

M. de Malesherbes laughed too and let it pass.

Voltaire, of course, fell into a furious rage; he had insulted Fréron on the stage, but Fréron replied to him in his paper; he could not conceive such audacity. His letters of that period are full, on every opportunity, of genuine abuse of M. de Malesherbes, whom he represents as the *protector* of Fréron's journals, because that just man was not his persecutor. In the frenzy of his vanity he goes so far as to say, alluding to that esteemed name: 'Fréron's name is no doubt that of the lowest of men, but *that of his protector must assuredly be the lowest but one*'. According to him, M. de Malesherbes *degrades literature*, he enters into his budget calculations *the product of Fréron's infamies, he loves a squabble*! (he, M. de Malesherbes, accused

to print the *Mercur de France*.—The *noise of the clarions* is an allusion to his great friend Mlle. Clairon.—*Tacite* is d'Alembert, who had translated a few portions of the great historian;—*Théophraste*, Duclos. At p. 210 there is a little hit at Voltaire apropos of the Dictionary *whose suspension is making Europe groan*. These pretentious words had really escaped him when writing about the persecutions of the *Encyclopédie*.

by Voltaire of loving a *squabble* !): my pen comes to a stop in copying such insults. But let M. de Malesherbes quit the Directorship of the Publishing Trade, then Voltaire, restored to composure and juster feelings, writes to d'Argental (October 14, 1763): 'M. de Malesherbes did not fail to do a service to the human mind by allowing the press more liberty than it has ever enjoyed. We were already half-way nearer to the English. . . .' Such reconciliations are quite a history, quite the portrait of a man, nay, the portrait, more or less, of all men.

So little spared by Voltaire, M. de Malesherbes only needed, in order to feel that he was entirely on the right path and in the golden mean, to be denounced by Pompignan, and that is what happened. Pompignan, elected to the French Academy in place of Maupertuis, had there delivered a party speech which angered the whole philosophic side. Voltaire had retaliated with a witticism, *Les QUAND*, which excited much amusement in this idle society. Pompignan, who was a fool in spite of some talent, made it an occasion for drawing up a justificatory *Memorandum to the King* (May, 1760), which he intended to have ostentatiously printed by having the King's name inscribed at the head and proclaiming to all: 'The manuscript of this Memorandum has been presented to the King, who has been pleased to read it himself, and has approved of its being printed'. By means of this coarse puff Pompignan expected to be exempt from the common rule and to be able to dispense with a censor. M. de Malesherbes required that he should have one for form's sake, unless he were exempted by a direct order from the Court, and as Pompignan, from pure bravado, still persisted in dispensing with it, and as he had already handed his Memorandum to the printer, M. de Malesherbes betook himself to the printing-office and had the type broken up. The anger of the ambitious bigot may be imagined; he fretted and fumed and threatened. Malesherbes had to put himself on guard by a justificatory Memorandum which he sent to the principal advisers of the little Court of the Dauphin, where Pompignan boasted of having friends: 'After all, he said in conclusion, because the Encyclopedists are reprehensible in many respects, it does not follow that their adversaries should not be amenable to any law'. And he explained in a few words how, with benevolent intentions and an

equity which sinned rather on the side of indulgence, he succeeded in making so many people dissatisfied: 'The fact is that I refuse very little, but I try to refuse everybody the same things'.

The *Encyclopedia* was one of the biggest affairs of M. de Malesherbes' administration. The *Encyclopedia* was originally planned by the booksellers. 'The Chancellor Daguesseau had knowledge of this project: not only did he approve of it, but he corrected and improved it, and he chose M. Diderot to be its editor-in chief'. This choice of Diderot by the pious and timorous Daguesseau, the same who granted the Abbé Prévost permission to print the first volumes of *Cleveland* only on condition that *Cleveland* should become a Catholic in the last volume, is piquant. In spite of all the precautions the pious Chancellor was able to take, the two first volumes of the *Encyclopedia* had given occasion for a Decree of the Council ordering its suppression, without, however, interdicting the continuation of the work. In order to guard against any difficulties in the future, it was required that all the articles should be submitted to the censorship of theologians, even those which seemed to be most foreign to theology. But these new precautions were not persisted in; soon the censorship became more lax, and the enemy had found means of entering the stronghold under the very nose of the sentries. The appearance of the seventh volume (1758) gave occasion for fresh and very loud complaints, and the Abbé de Bernis, then in the ministry, had to write to M. de Malesherbes to consult him about more efficacious means of carrying on the censorship. M. de Malesherbes replied to the minister, in a remarkable letter, that there was really little reliance on a censorship; that in a work of any length, an author with any wit would always succeed in eluding it; that he knew of only one sure way to remedy the evils; that was to make the authors personally responsible for their faults:

'If this is the surest way, continued M. de Malesherbes to the Abbé de Bernis, you will ask me why I have not employed it hitherto? To that, Sir, will you allow me to reply with full confidence and to open my heart to you? You will find in it a feeling to which you are surely no stranger.

'If I were a Criminal Magistrate, it would be my business to intimidate those who were unfortunate enough to have

to do with me. I do not know whether I should be qualified for that profession, but fortunately it is not mine; I am charged with an administration which concerns men of Letters, scholars, authors of every kind; that is to say, men that I like and esteem, with whom I have always desired to pass my life, who do honour to their century and their country. I do not hold that a man's talents should save him from the penalty due to his misdemeanours, I think that every man should be subject to the laws; but it seems to me that men of celebrity should have this advantage that one could offer them penalties on the one hand and rewards on the other.

'That being granted, Sir, you see how I am situated, I am able to impose restrictions on men of Letters, to cramp their genius, to complain of their misdemeanours, and I can procure them no favours; I can injure them, and *I can never be serviceable to them*'.

Applying these remarks to the *Encyclopedia*, Malesherbes pointed to the two principal authors, d'Alembert and Diderot, the one, d'Alembert, the more prudent of the two, and 'who has never had any adventures', sharing in academical honours and literary favours, and on whom he had some degree of hold; the second, Diderot, who had been guilty of errors and had been severely punished:

'But are these errors irreparable? continued Malesherbes; the disgraces he has already experienced and that which he still suffers, since he is for the present prohibited from entering the Academies, are they not sufficient? You see, Sir, what I am driving at'.

And he went on to propose, not to bribe (far from Malesherbes such a thought!) but to restrain Diderot by representing to him that his moderation in the future, his care to avoid in his great work all lawful cause of complaint, might procure him what they called at the time the King's favours; and he would have been willing to give him some pledge beforehand in a ministerial letter:

'If you approve of this idea, he said in conclusion, and if you think that it may be carried out, I will speak of it, if you think right, to Mme. de Pompadour, and I will entreat you afterwards to be so good as to guide me in the other steps necessary to carry it into effect'.

There was only one ground on which M. de Malesherbes had any chance of agreeing with Mme. de Pompadour, that was the *Encyclopedia*.

Here we see laid bare Malesherbes' benevolent intention with regard to that great enterprise, when he explained himself to men upon whom he could rely and who were philosophers like himself. When he had to justify it and vouch for it at the pious Court of the Queen and the Dauphin, he was more at a loss and was obliged to have recourse to manœuvres which, in him, make us smile: 'If you are admitted to the committees in which the evils of bad books are discussed before the Queen, he wrote to one of his friends who belonged to that party, I entreat you to call their attention to the fact that *Les Cacouacs* (a facetious pamphlet of Moreau against the Encyclopedists) has dealt a more fatal blow at the *Encyclopedists* than a Decree of the Council could have done, the effect of which would have been to banish one of the editors, who would have finished his work in a foreign country.' By these subterfuges (I know no better word) did Malesherbes try to disarm and tranquillize the Queen, who replied laughing, 'that a bad cause could not have been better defended'. But, frankly speaking, Malesherbes could not believe that *Les Cacouacs*, in spite of its vogue of a day, would be powerful enough to radically cure the public and kill the *Encyclopedists* outright. 'The proof of the effect of this pamphlet, he insisted, is seen in the anguish of the offended authors, from whom I have received ten times as many complaints as I have received against them from *the good people*' (*gens de bien*). The *gens de bien* means those of the party of the Queen and the Dauphin; and indeed they called themselves by that title; but I confess that I am sorry to see Malesherbes trying to put them on the wrong scent, by according them a name which for him had not quite the same meaning.

You will think perhaps that the Encyclopedists were satisfied and grateful? You are far out of your reckoning. Grimm, afterwards, did justice to Malesherbes' good offices; but d'Alembert at the time complained with the greatest bluntness and bitterness of being sacrificed to Fréron. I quote here one of these letters of d'Alembert who, desiring every freedom and licence for himself, would suffer none in others (January 23, 1758):

'Sir,—

'My friends (friends are always wonderfully serviceable on such occasions) force me to break the silence I had

resolved to keep on Fréron's last paper. The author of *Les Cacouacs*, in his attack on the *Encyclopædia* in general and some of the authors in particular, thought proper not to say anything explicitly against me; Fréron was pleased not to follow his example. In one passage of *Les Cacouacs* mention is made of geometry; Fréron, in referring to this passage, added a note in which he quotes one of my works, implying that the author intended to point at me in the said passage, although the sentence he refers to is not found in any of my works. My friends have represented to me, Sir, that the accusations of the author of *Les Cacouacs* were too serious and too atrocious that I should suffer to be implicated by name; I take the liberty therefore of laying before you my complaints of Fréron's comments on me, and of demanding justice'.

Thereupon M. de Malesherbes, with an exemplary patience and like a real justice of the peace in literary matters, communicated with Fréron, and asked him what grounds he thought he had for so violently attacking the *Encyclopædia* and one of its authors so personally. Fréron replied this time with many witty and just remarks (January 27) :

" Sir,—

'I find it impossible to send you a list of the encyclopedic articles in which I have been directly or indirectly attacked. I have never read the whole of the *Encyclopædia* and never shall read it, unless I commit some great crime and am condemned to do so as a punishment. Besides, these Gentlemen drag me without any rhyme or reason into the most irrelevant articles, in which I should never suspect that I was being discussed. I have been told that in the article *Cependant*, for example, there were two hits, one at God, the other at me. But the article in which they have shown least restraint at my expense, is that on *Criticism*; there are a thousand others that I do not remember, and a thousand others that I have not read'.

Fréron would cut too good a figure in all this, if I did not add that, at the end of his letter, his vanity got the better of him and excited itself to the extent of saying :

'I believe that I know myself a little, Sir; I know what they are worth, and feel my own worth. Let them write against me as much as they please; I know that with a single thrust I can do more harm to their petty literary existence than they can injure me with whole pages of the *Encyclopædia*'.

On both sides there is a moment when madness begins. In spite of all, Fréron had the right on his side; and, on

this subject, M. de Malesherbes wrote an admirable letter to d'Alembert, which may be read in the *Memoirs* of the Abbé Morellet, and in which are laid down all the true principles of literary tolerance. He joined to it a letter to the Abbé, who had mediated in this business, and said to him :

'As for the men of Letters, experience has taught me that any one who has to issue any order where their self-esteem is concerned, must renounce their friendship, unless he is ready to assume a partiality which will make him unworthy of their esteem'.

'I am quite accustomed, he said again on another occasion, to the whims and the paroxysms to which men of Letters are subject ; I am never offended by them, because I know that these little faults are inseparable from their talents'.

Take note that, his irascibility notwithstanding, d'Alembert a few months later asks for M. de Malesherbes' tacit permission to print at Lyons (with *Geneva* on the title-page) his *Mélanges de Littérature*. One of the Encyclopedists is given him as censor for form's sake, and the proofs travel backwards and forwards under cover to M. de Malesherbes. By the same ways and means the proofs of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* travelled between Amsterdam and Montmorency. M. de Malesherbes, who read them on their passage, himself saw to the necessary corrections in order that the book might circulate in France, and, in spite of these amiable services, he won the acknowledgment of Rousseau, this time unfaithful to his natural ingratitude. This acknowledgment, by the way, brought Rousseau luck, as he never wrote anything finer than the *Four Letters to M. de Malesherbes*.

I might multiply examples and show in a large number of cases what was the precise part played by M. de Malesherbes, invested with his authority, in his relations with the men of Letters of his time ; how much he liked them and how efficaciously, though not blindly, he protected them, without ever failing in his duties, and how he succeeded in preserving an almost impossible measure in a situation which exposed him on all hands to the most contrary complaints, susceptibilities and exigencies. I will only cite one trait which testifies to the elevated and disinterested views he carried into the Directorship of Letters.

One day it occurred to Marmontel, who was editor of the *Mercur de France*, to make himself agreeable to M. de Malesherbes by writing a eulogy of one of his cousins, the Président de Lamoignon, who had just died (May, 1759), and he requested him to procure him a few biographical details. M. de Malesherbes replied :

‘I am very sensible, Sir, to the offer you kindly make me of publishing a kind of Eulogy of a man in whom I cannot but be interested both as a friend and as the head of my family. But, since you ask my opinion, I do not think that the life of M. de Lamoignon has shown any events brilliant enough to interest the public much. The poor health he always had, etc., etc. (Here follow some particulars concerning his cousin.)

‘After replying to you, Sir, as a kinsman and friend of M. de Lamoignon, will you allow me to give you my opinion as a friend of literature and as taking an interest in the success of a periodical work which must acquire a fresh lustre in your hands? The Eulogies that you propose to publish of men of merit who are mourned by the public, will be the most flattering homage to their memory and to their families, and it will be very agreeable to you to be the dispenser of them; but that will only be the case as long as you do not allow them to be cheapened by being too easy and lavish with them. You must not think, Sir, that the best composed and the best written eulogy will impress the public unless they have declared themselves in favour before the author. . . .

‘I do not make this objection in reference to my nephew (who had also recently died), because the public kindly shared our grief, and because besides an Advocate-General is a public man, exposed like an author to criticism, and because for that reason, he is susceptible of eulogy. Besides, I confess that I have perhaps considered the grievous situation of his family more than your work : *Solatia luctus exigua, misero sed debita patri*. In short, Sir, I thought my nephew was worthy of the tears of the public, and I think my cousin is only worthy of the tears of his friends : you see how naturally I speak to you’.

These words, it seems to me, paint M. de Malesherbes in all the habit of his life : *natural* before everything, simple and honest, sensible, quick and plain-spoken to the extent of appearing a little brusque. Let us try to imagine him as he was in person, and not after portraits which are too idealized, too *sentimentalized* and too softened down. He was careless in appearance, of a round figure, and had something countrified.—‘M. de Malesherbes, said Louis XVI

to him, you and I have the absurdity of clinging to the manners of the olden times; but is this absurdity not better than the fine airs we see nowadays? — 'When one saw him for the first time in his maroon coat with large pockets, his gilt buttons, his muslin ruffles, his snuff-be-smeared frill, his round wig, badly combed and awry, and heard him speak with so little affectation and study, though with so much sense and so much learning and wit', it was impossible to imagine oneself in presence of so revered a man. It is Boissy d'Anglas who describes him thus, and Chateaubriand finishes the portrait by adding: 'But, at the first sentence that passed his lips, one became sensible of the man of an old name and the superior magistrate'.

His conversation was copious, pithy, abounding in ideas; he knew everything, or at least he knew a great deal of everything, and it issued in streams with an animation and profusion which made his words as interesting as they were instructive. On every subject he had a stock of accumulated ideas and knowledge, and he was all aflame when imparting them. He had no less a store of affections and feelings. Towards the end, his warmth of heart often found an outlet in bursts of indignation and the righteous anger of the honest man. In one or two passages of his *Memoirs*, where he introduces M. de Malesherbes, M. de Chateaubriand has very well described that impetuosity of words, which somebody compared 'to the irregular and perpetual commotion of a boiling liquid'. We find a conversation of Malesherbes recorded at some length in the *Memoirs* of Bertrand de Molleville¹; this conversation greatly offended, I know not why, M. Boissy d'Anglas, who thinks it *joyial*; it is only very animated and very natural. Malesherbes is great enough not to require draping when he is shown². The Abbé

¹ It is reported a little differently in the two editions of the *Memoirs* (1797 and 1816); I prefer it in the first text of 1797 (vol. iii, p. 21); there it is less written and more *spoken*, and nearer the source as it were.

² Another touch of nature: he loved children; an amiable and distinguished lady, after reading this article in the *Constitutionnel*, does me the honour to send me a few reminiscences which it recalled to her memory: 'I remember the noble old man one day holding the hand of a little girl of five, and walking with her in the gardens at Malesherbes; he proposed *hide-and-seek*, and the little girl thought her old friend took as much pleasure in it as herself. I remember again, two years later, this same little girl playing with M. de Malesherbes' grand-children at Lausanne; the grand-father was set to decide upon some grammatical questions, one of the

Morellet remarked that Malesherbes, with so many lights and so much good sense, was not hostile to peculiar opinions and that he had a liking for paradox : his vast learning helped him here, by showing him that there are more things in existence than one imagines. Lastly, to touch upon his various traits, there was in his talk not only cheerfulness, but a trace of the tone of the eighteenth century, and Chamfort has quoted a clever saying of his which almost savours of the Regency period : one always belongs to one's time.

But M. de Malesherbes was before everything a man of the olden times, expanding and delighting a little more than in reason in the lights of his century. He was a philosopher, but he was not like the philosophers of that time, who all, more or less, had the destructive and revolutionary instinct. He went his way without guile, in all uprightness, with a simple probity ; he would have desired merely to uphold and regenerate. In politics, he aimed only at reform and desired it as far as possible in accordance with the principles of the ancient right, of the *antique liberty* in which he believed perhaps too much, just as he trusted too much in modern good sense. In all things, we should find that he belonged to the race of the L'Hôpitals, the Jérôme Bignons, the Vaubans, the Catinats, or even the Fénélons (it is a pleasure to match such names with his), rather than to that of the innovating Encyclopedists. In moral respects he is separated, be it noted, not by a shade, but by a gulf, from the Mirabeaus and the Condorcets.

In his judicial capacity he was a model ; his words, his acts, when the need arose, tended to greatness. As a minister he was not so, and he has acknowledged it himself in a hundred ways : 'The qualities necessary for discharging an office, especially an office on the judicial bench, are not the same as those which are needed in an administrator, and they are rarely found united'. He wrote that in one of his *Mémoires sur la Librairie*. If he thought so of the administrator, with still more reason did he think

chief of which was whether the word *ténébres* was masculine or feminine. The oldest of these young academicians was eight, and M. de Malesherbes presided with a seriousness that appeared quite natural to us'. It was just after this children's play that the generous old man returned expressly to Paris to be at his post in the hour of danger.

so of the minister : ' To make a good minister, he said, learning and probity are not enough. Turgot and I have proved it. Our learning was all from books ; we had no knowledge of men '. We have no reason to call in question these words which he repeated more than once and to more than one person. He remarked again, speaking of Louis XVI, that that extreme sensibility, so pleasing and desirable in private life and in tranquil times, often, in times of revolution, became more fatal to a king than certain vices '. This remark of Malesherbes is applicable to himself as a minister and statesman. A great and real statesman should not be good like a private individual ; he should act and govern in the interest of good and honest people, that is his morality ; but, in order to do that he must believe in the existence of evil and the wicked, believe in them strongly and continually distrust them.

Great as a judge, with too much feeling for a minister and too quickly disheartened, an heroic advocate and a sublime victim, thus we may sum up the whole Malesherbes.

M. Dupin has endeavoured, in his excellent work, to show that Malesherbes was not mistaken, I do not mean in his conduct, but in his views, and that on all the capital points, of *religious freedom, liberty of the press, individual liberty, equality in matters of taxation*, this enlightened man only anticipated the ideas which the various Charters and Constitutions have since brought into force. M. Dupin has perfectly proved this thesis. Malesherbes, that Franklin of the old stock, very clearly embraced modern society in his fundamental articles ; he foresaw and anticipated it ; but if he was not mistaken in his aim, he had formed illusions with regard to the distances and the incidents of the voyage. In a word, he believed in the Promised Land before the crossing of the Red Sea. That is a kind of error against which it is well to be ever on one's guard, for the Red Sea, so geographers say, has more than one arm, and it would be disagreeable to society to have to cross still another, however small it may be.

CHATEAUBRIAND, AS STATESMAN AND POLITICIAN

Monday, September 30, 1850.

M. DE CHATEAUBRIAND started on his political career with the Restoration in 1814; he was forty-five years of age, he had published all his great literary works, and he felt himself somewhat at a loss how to apply henceforth his high and strong faculties. The Empire, against which he had entered into conflict, stifled him: when the colossus appeared to be tottering, Chateaubriand quivered with excitement; when the whole structure came to the ground, he uttered a cry, a cry of savage joy. From the very first day, he was in the arena, and we may say, to borrow one of his own images, that he entered the Restoration with a roar. '*I roared*, he said after his fall in 1824, *when I retired from office*'. So he might have said: '*I roared on entering it*'.

What was this impetuous and passionate nature which took up and dropped so angrily the things of this world, whilst proclaiming itself so undeceived about them?

In the midst of the dreams and phantoms of his imagination, M. de Chateaubriand always had a taste for serious studies. His first work, his *Essay on Revolutions*, testifies to the wideness and the variety of his reading, and to a marked leaning to political considerations in the intervals of his reveries. At this first period of his life, the young writer, although an *émigré*, did not heartily espouse any political cause; we may recall his saying about Chamfort: '*I have always been astonished that a man who had so much knowledge of men could so warmly espouse any cause whatever*'.¹ Such words give the measure of M.

¹ See *Causeries du Lundi* (present translation), vol. i., p. 351.

de Chateaubriand's convictions at the time that he wrote them. We must never forget, in afterwards judging him, that fundamental indifference upon which sprouted, since, all the passions, all the political hopes and irritations, and the most magnificent phrases ever produced by a writer's talent. But this foundation of indifference existed always, and we suddenly see it appearing at moments when we least expect it. On reprinting his *Essay* in 1826, and pretending to criticize it, the author said, in the new Preface : ' You will find in it too a young man who is exalted rather than cast down by misfortune, and whose heart is *entirely devoted to his king*, his honour and his country '. There is an anachronism in these three words, and the young Chateaubriand by no means had that triple cult, especially the first. If, in his *Essay*, he speaks very severely of Republicans, he does not treat the Royalists any better : ' The Republican, he says, incessantly exposed to the danger of being pillaged, robbed, torn to pieces by a furious populace, glories in his good fortune ; the subject, a placid slave, boasts of his master's repasts and caresses '. And his conclusion was after the manner of Rousseau in favour of the man of nature and of the virgin forests of Canada. As a young man then, M. de Chateaubriand could obey his honour and pay his debt by emigrating, but he was by no means a Royalist in heart and affection, and he did not lie at the end of his career when he said, boastfully : ' Our heart has never beaten strongly for kings '.

He returned to France in 1800, and the truth is that he attached himself very readily and unreservedly to the Consulate. The preface to the first edition of the *Génie du Christianisme* ends with a quotation (since suppressed) in which Bonaparte is compared to Cyrus. The new Cyrus has said to the prince of priests :

' Jehovah, the God of heaven, has delivered to me the kingdoms of the earth, and charged me to raise His temple. Go, ascend the holy mountain of Jerusalem, rebuild the temple of Jehovah '.—' At this command of the liberator, continues Chateaubriand, all the Jews, even to the least among them, should gather materials to hasten the reconstruction of the edifice. An obscure Israelite, I bring to-day my grain of sand '.

Thus at the age of thirty-three did the brilliant

writer express himself who was going to inaugurate the century.

Even then he was seized with a volleys of political ambition; he entered office, he went to Rome under Cardinal Fesch. But shall I say it? even before he gave in his resignation, he was already disheartened and disgusted at the outset. All the letters he wrote at this date prove it. He only sought a door to leave by: the death of the Duc d'Enghien offered him one, a fine and magnificent door, a brilliant exit, just what he loved; he did not resist the temptation, and, the day after his resignation we may assert that he was very much more of a Royalist than he had ever been till then.

Was it a Royalist, indeed, who gave in his resignation on the occasion of the death of the Duc d'Enghien? No, it was a poet, a man of first impulses, a man disgusted with the first disappointments and the inevitable slowness of promotion, a young man still intoxicated with the poetry of the deserts, who wished to go and recover it under other skies, and had not yet extracted from himself all the grand works which he expected to bring him glory. These disappointments, these vague desires, these romantic hopes, were confounded, at the moment of his resignation, with a feeling of generous indignation, and made a sensation which imposed upon him henceforth a part to play.

Meanwhile M. de Chateaubriand had visited the East and Greece; he had written *Les Martyrs*, *L'Itinéraire*; he had nearly ended his work, his literary voyage around the world, and he was never able to throw off the tedium of life; he felt a great void within him, and his talent demanded food and nourishment. His famous article in the *Mercur*, in 1807, in which he prided himself upon being a Tacitus under Nero, later that Reception Address at the Academy, which he made it impossible to deliver, were indications, above all, of that discomfort of an immense talent without sufficient occupation, and of a heart incurably weary.

The twenty-fourth canto of *Les Martyrs* opens with an admirable invocation and some noble words of farewell addressed to the Muse: 'It is finished, O Muse! another moment, and I abandon thy altars for ever! I will not again tell of the loves and the seductive dreams of men: I must quit the lyre with my youth'. That youth, which was

indeed fleeing, although it was still to have many more returns, was leaving M. de Chateaubriand in the midst of life with a powerful talent, a consuming ardour, an ambition which knew not where to seek its object. In many a passage he has expressed that impatient feeling, so natural to strong natures, which makes them desire a vast field of activity. In that Reception Address at the Academy which could not be delivered, he said in the opening with much vigour :

' There are people who would like to make literature an abstract thing, and isolate it in the midst of human affairs. . . . What ! after a revolution which in a few years has made us live through the events of several centuries, shall we prohibit the writer every lofty moral consideration ! shall we forbid him to examine the serious side of things ! shall he spend his life in a frivolous occupation with grammatical quibbles, rules of taste, and little literary maxims ! shall he grow old confined in the swaddling-clothes of the cradle ! shall he not at the end of his days show a brow furrowed by long labours, grave thoughts, and often by those manly sorrows which give grandeur to his life ! What then are the weighty cares that will have whitened his hair ? the miserable torments of vanity and the childish play of wit '.

Later he will admirably reproduce that same thought in the last chapter of *La Monarchie selon la Charte* : he asks himself what was formerly the destiny of those men in France whose youth was gone and who had reached the fruit season, and, after describing their existence, deprived of the noble occupations of public life, idle by profession, growing old in garrison towns, in antechambers, in drawing-rooms, in the corner of some old château, with nothing to occupy their minds but the anecdote of the town, the meeting of an academy, the success of a new play, and for the great days, the fall of a minister :

' All that, he exclaimed, was indeed little worthy of a man ! Was it not hard enough that he was of no service at an age when one is equal to anything ? To-day the manly occupations which filled the existence of a Roman, which make the career of an Englishman so fine, will be open on all sides ; we shall be men when we have ceased to be youths. We shall comfort ourselves for the loss of the illusions of our early age, by trying to become illustrious citizens : one has nothing to fear of time, when one can be rejuvenated by glory '.

An idea is already outlining itself: M. de Chateaubriand, the poet that he is, regrets his youth, and he wishes to replace it at least by something great, something serious, something to fill up his time, and that will be worth the trouble; he desires brilliancy and glory in order to *become young again*. In his *Memoirs*, the chapter in which he begins upon his political life and is headed *Of Bonaparte*, likewise opens with a page which may be placed beside the last invocation of that poem of the *Martyrs*: 'Youth is a charming thing; it sets off at the beginning of life, crowned with flowers, like the Athenian fleet departing to the conquest of Sicily . . .' And the poet concludes that, when youth is gone with its desires and dreams, the man must indeed, as a last resort, descend to earth and sad reality. What then shall he do? He enters politics, for want of something better; for these great poets' politics is then only a make-shift, they come down to it when their wings begin to fail them. This idea of M. de Chateaubriand coincides exactly with that of M. de Lamartine.

In one of the most remarkable poems in *Les Harmonies* (*Novissima Verba*), that tuneful poet celebrates love and declares that there is nothing else in the world:

Femmes, anges mortels, création divine,
Seul rayon dont la vie un moment s'illumine !
Je le dis à cette heure, heure de vérité,
Comme je l'aurais dit quand devant la beauté
Mon cœur épanoui, qui se sentait éclore,
Fondait comme une neige aux rayons de l'aurore,
Je ne regrette rien de ce monde que vous !

And he adds, still speaking of women and love:

Quand vous vous desséchez sur le cœur qui vous aime,
Ou que ce cœur flétri se dessèche lui-même ;
Quand le foyer divin qui brûle encore en nous
Ne peut plus rallumer la flamme éteinte en vous,
Que nul sein ne bat plus quand le nôtre soupire,

Alors, comme un esprit exilé de sa sphère
Se résigne en pleurant aux ombres de la terre,
Détachant de vos pas nos yeux voilés de pleurs,
Aux faux biens d'ici-bas nous dévouons nos cœurs.

The *false blessings* of this life are, according to the poet, reality, the world of politics, the government of society and

one's fellow-men; the poets, when they have exhausted their dreams and their chimeras, consent to come down and stoop to them, some like M. de Lamartine with serenity and clemency, others like M. de Chateaubriand with more anger and bitterness. But, in every case, the poet only consents to take an active interest in us, in terrestrial things and in governable human matter, because youth is gone. This confession is important. It remains to be known whether, when a man feels so strongly that ideal regret of the past and of his youth, his returns, his *calls back* to it are not stronger than they should be, inso-much as to disturb at any moment the strict prudence and the attention which the handling of great human interests demands. It is much to be feared indeed that, when a man approaches politics from that point of view, in the mood of an unemployed genius that desires at any cost to do something and throw off his tedium by distinguishing himself, he is, above all, in quest of emotions and parts to play.

M. de Chateaubriand caused a real explosion in politics in April, 1814, by his famous pamphlet: *De Buonaparte et des Bourbons*. He entered upon this new career with sword in hand like a conqueror out of his wits, and from the first day he embraced the cause of the Restoration, with all his hatred against the falling régime. Here begins a period of M. de Chateaubriand's political life that we shall never succeed in bringing into harmony with the second part. His political life after 1814 may be divided into three periods: first, from March 30, 1814, to June 6, 1824, the purely Royalist period; second, from June 6, 1824, the day of his dismissal from the ministry till the fall of the Restoration, the liberal period in open contradiction with the first; third, the period of Royalism and Republicanism after July, 1830, when Chateaubriand says to the Duchess of Berry to salve his conscience: *Your son is my king*, and at the same time extends one hand to Carrel, the other to Béranger, and in good time puts himself on the safe side with the future Republic. The Memoirs, written in this latter period, express all his contradictions, and contain all his confessions, which it suffices to compare.

To obtain the key to these contradictions and to explain the whole man, we need besides only refer to that poetic

and *literary* nature, which is essential and fundamental in M. de Chateaubriand : on this side only shall we find the explanation. Should we try to regard him purely and simply as a politician, and expect to discover in reasons of this order the well-founded motives of his variations and his incongruities, we should never succeed.

What characterizes the poet is that he has an ideal, and before the Empire came to an end M. de Chateaubriand had formed an ideal in politics. In his Reception Address for the Academy he said :

‘ M. de Chénier worshipped liberty : can we make that a crime ? The very knights themselves, should they rise out of their tombs to-day, would follow the light of our century. We should see the formation of that illustrious alliance between honour and liberty, just as in the reign of the Valois the Gothic battlements in our monumental buildings crowned with infinite grace the orders borrowed from Greece ’.

That is very pretty and attractive : we arrive at a political symbol through an image. This alliance between honour and liberty forms what I may call M. de Chateaubriand's political escutcheon. In the *Réflexions* he published in December, 1814, he returned to this idea : ‘ Who amongst us could oppose the generous alliance of liberty and honour ’ ? If we had to seek an approximately continuous line in M. de Chateaubriand's political conduct, it would be that : but how often we should see it broken by anger, resentment and the meanest of passions !

Liberty in the first place, in spite of the frequent use he makes of that word, it is impossible to make him out faithful to it in the real practical sense during the whole of his period of ultra-Royalism. Although his *Memoirs* are full of naïve and sincere enough confessions, we must not go to them to form a correct judgment of this first part of Chateaubriand's political life : he is entirely occupied in patching it up for the benefit of the liberal and republican generations that have forgotten the real circumstances. For example, in his *Memoirs*, he appears to say that in 1814 he did not count upon the foreigner ; that he continually hoped in a national movement which would have dispensed the Allies from entering Paris and would have liberated the French by their own hands.

Do not believe it. Open the frantic pamphlet *De Buonaparte et des Bourbons*, and there read these words :

' And what Frenchman besides could forget what he owes to the Prince Regent of England, to the noble people who contributed so much to our deliverance ? Elizabeth's standards waved in the armies of Henri IV, they reappear in the battalions which give us back Louis XVIII. We are too sensible to glory not to admire this Lord Wellington, who recalls in so striking a manner the virtues and talents of our Turenne '.

In the Memoirs, he describes himself as heart-broken at the entry of the Allies into Paris : ' I saw them defile on the boulevards, stupefied and crushed in my heart, as if my name of Frenchman were being torn from me, to be replaced by the number by which I should henceforth be known in the Siberian mines . . . ' That is one of those pangs which are felt and related after the event. At the time he experienced no more than a furious and delirious joy. He would make us believe that at the first Restoration, he was in favour of retaining the tricoloured cockade : that is an untruth : ' What have we been hearing in France these six months, he wrote in 1814, if not these words : *Are the Bourbons here ? Where are the Princes ? Are they coming ? Ah ! if we only saw a white banner !* '

In vain does he now try to produce an apology for that pamphlet, *De Buonaparte et des Bourbons* ; we smile to see him shelter himself behind all the most liberal authorities to show that he was right in expressing himself as he did at the time. Lanjuinais, Mme. de Staël, Ducis, Lemer cier, even Chénier, Carnot, Benjamin Constant, Béranger, M. de Latouche, ' my brave and unfortunate Carrel ', all are appealed to as witnesses to justify the famous pamphlet. Why could he not simply say : I have been violent, I have been unjust, I have been passionate ? This is the reason of M. de Chateaubriand's dilemma : he wishes to be popular, he wishes to be the idol of the century and the future, and he is conscious when it is too late that he has offended and insulted the great popular idol, Napoleon. He would conciliate and undo everything, and (an amusing touch !) after exhausting all the witnesses for the defence, he ends by citing the testimony of Napoleon himself, whom he supposes to have

said, perusing the pamphlet at Fontainebleau : *This is right, and that is not right.*

It is difficult to imagine what Napoleon could have found that was right in a pamphlet on every page of which we may read sentences like the following :

' He has done more to corrupt men, he has done more injury to the human race in the short space of ten years than all the tyrants of Rome together from Nero to the last persecutor of the Christians. . . A little more of such a reign, and France would have been no better than a den of robbers '.

No, all this is childish. A real statesman might have started upon his career with a violent and incendiary pamphlet ; but he would have left it behind him as he advanced, and taken good care not to try to revive and reconcile what is neither reconcilable nor compatible. The man of Letters in M. de Chateaubriand, observe, attaches a prodigious importance to that detestable pamphlet : ' Louis XVIII declared, as I have several times remarked, that my pamphlet was worth to him more than an army of a hundred thousand men ; he might have added that it was for him a certificate of life ' . For it was not even known whether he was in existence. And he continues modestly : ' I helped to give him the crown a second time by the happy issue of the Spanish War ' . If it was good taste in Louis XVIII to say that that pamphlet was worth an army to him, it is very bad taste in the author not to be satisfied with that hyperbolical praise and to try to improve upon it. But such is the literary nature when no check is put upon it, and it is this literary nature, ever springing up again and so quickly excited, that every moment compromises the statesman in Chateaubriand.

The politician, the superior statesman is patient : he does not from the very first day put his affair into the hands of Fortune : he waits, he yields, he can play second and even third fiddle before rising to the place of the first. Provided that he have his day and come at last to possess the reality of things, what matter a few vanities and a few unrealities of the moment ? M. de Chateaubriand, from the beginning in 1814, is impatient, and he is surprised, he is piqued that they do not come to him at once as to the indispensable man : ' I was so much neglected and thrown aside, he says, that I thought of retiring to

Switzerland'. And he shows Louis XVIII as jealous and already disgusted with him, and *Monsieur* (the Comte d'Artois) as never having read the *Génie du Christianisme*. I can well believe it; it is not astonishing that Charles X had never read much of Chateaubriand's great works: 'I owe M. de La Vauguyon a grudge, that amiable prince said one day, for having educated me so badly that I have never been able to read four consecutive pages, not even four pages of *Gil Blas*, without being bored'. But a politician, a man of real ambition, who is really anxious to hold the reins of government in this world, is not discouraged by such trifles, and does not behave himself like an author whose chief need is a little hollow praise: he aims at the substantial. M. de Chateaubriand was ardent and in great haste to advance. In 1814 Carnot published a *Memorandum to the King*, which was more or less opportune on his part, but dictated by an honourable patriotic feeling and a manifest desire for conciliation. Chateaubriand replied violently by his *Réflexions politiques*, in which he arrived at somewhat analogous conclusions, but after casting contempt and insults upon the men who had had the misfortune of being implicated in the Revolution. The first word he cast in the face of his adversaries was *regicide*. He spoke very well of the Charter, and then commenced magnificently his explanation of the constitutional theory; but if the conclusions were sound, the arguments were almost always violent and irritating, the least calculated to attract and win minds to the cause he cried up. 'He thinks he is pouring oil on our wounds, remarked somebody, but it is boiling oil'. Pythagoras said that one should never *stir the fire with a sword*: Chateaubriand, thanks to the nature of his talent and his flaming pen, has hardly ever done anything else.

In his *Memoirs* he describes himself as being greatly disgusted with the game as early as 1814, thinking of returning to a life of solitude, of retiring to the shores of that Lake of Geneva, whither he continually goes without ever being able to remain there. How often he has reminded us of that line, which seems literally to apply to him:

Le vicomte indigné sortait au second acte !

In this case, he wanted to leave at the first act. But Mme. de Duras, 'who had taken me under her wing, he said,

exerted herself so successfully, that they disinterred a vacant ambassadorship for me, the Swedish ambassadorship':

'Louis XVIII, who was already tired of hearing me mentioned, was happy to make a present of me to his brother King Bernadotte. The latter actually imagined that I was being sent to Stockholm to dethrone him! Eh! *bon Dieu*, princes of the earth, I dethrone nobody; keep your crowns, if you can, and above all do not give them to me, *for I do not want them*'.

What, I pray you, does all this mean? Would you not think, in truth, that he has been offered a crown, and that he has had all the trouble in the world to avoid taking it? Oh! there we have the poet, the René that we know, who, at the smallest obstacle, at the slightest delay in the accomplishment of his desire, is disgusted, puts on disdainful and proud airs, and threatens to return, as before, to Canada or Florida! That is how he shows himself in all the political part of his Memoirs. At the most critical and decisive moments, he acts the disillusioned and the dreamer; he begins to talk with the ravens, perched on the trees by the wayside, with the swallows, with the bee. That is the way with poets, and that is also their charm when they do it simply, naturally, innocently; but when they affect to do so in the midst of the serious duties which their ambition has put upon them, I stop them and think them very petty and even culpable. From the moment that you aspire to govern men and to become the pilot of society, try at least to do so consistently and seriously. Be ambitious in good earnest and openly, that is the nobler and more estimable course.

In 1814 M. de Chateaubriand was in fact less disillusioned than he would wish to appear. He still hoped much, he hoped everything, and he spoke of Louis XVIII accordingly: 'He walks with difficulty, he said of him with all the resources and all the complaisance of the language, but in a noble and *touching way*; his figure is nothing extraordinary; his head is superb; his glance is both that of a king and a man of genius'. Later he will borrow, to paint Louis XVIII, some of Béranger's colours; but at that time, when he was still awaiting his political fortune at the hands of that impotent king, he saw him thus in his majesty.

The Emperor disembarked from the island of Elba in March, 1815. On hearing the news, Chateaubriand declared that all would be saved if he were appointed Minister for Internal Affairs. But he had that office only while the Court was at Ghent, and when they re-entered Paris he was already put aside. The necessities of the moment had caused Fouché to be considered as the essential and unique man in this dangerous crisis. Against this choice M. de Chateaubriand had an aversion which one may very well understand, and which he expressed, as he affirms, to Louis XVIII. He tells us that at Saint-Denis, at the moment of returning to Paris, Louis XVIII questioned him about the adoption of Fouché, and that he replied: 'Sire, the thing is done, I ask Your Majesty's permission to keep silence'. 'No, no, tell me; you know how I have resisted since we left Ghent'. 'Sire, I only obey your commands; pardon my fidelity: *I believe the monarchy is ended*'. Whereupon the King replied: 'Well! Monsieur de Chateaubriand, I am of your opinion'.

I know not whether this conversation took place exactly as here reported; but, admitting the account to be exact, I see in it another proof that Chateaubriand was not a real statesman. What! the King starts him on the theme of Fouché's appointment, and, instead of telling his reasons, instead of pointing out objections and consequences, and suggesting means of recalling or making the best of this disastrous choice, he first asks permission to hold his tongue; then he merely says: *La monarchie est finie*. He goes from one extreme to another. All or nothing, that is his motto. Nothing could be more opposed to the political genius, which, on the contrary, tries to make the best of the most risky situations, and never, as we say, throws the helve after the hatchet.

In dudgeon, and although his title as Minister of State put upon him some duties of restraint, he immediately threw himself into the opposition, into that of the right, and there he made his point. His writings, his actions at that time should be studied, not according to the posthumous interpretation he put upon them, but in history itself and at the sources. His anger at seeing himself ousted from power at the moment when he thought he held it, drove him to take part in and to incite by his talent all the reactionary excesses which the Chamber of

1815 demanded. He began by demanding the suspension for a year of the irremovability of judges, in order to see who was a Royalist on the bench, and who was not. All the ministries of conciliation and compromise which tried to govern at that time found in him an implacable adversary. M. Decazes (that is a matter of course), as the favourite of the master, got nothing but insults : but the noble Duc de Richelieu was not more fortunate. There was under the Restoration a liberal ministry *par excellence*, the only one that attempted the impossible perhaps, but that attempted it in all loyalty, the Dessolles Ministry : M. de Chateaubriand did not rest until he had succeeded in overthrowing it. What he wanted then was that France should be governed by Royalists pure and simple, by men who had had nothing whatever to do with the preceding régimes, by men who were *entirely devoted to God and the King (tout à Dieu et au roi)*, and God knows what was meant then by that formula !):

‘ To them, he exclaimed, it behoves to direct affairs ; they will improve all that is intrusted to them ; the others spoil everything they touch. Let us not make honest people dependent upon the men who have oppressed them, but let the good guide the bad ’ that is the order of morality and justice. Intrust the first positions in the State to the real friends of the Legitimate monarchy. Do you need so large a number of them to save France ? I only demand seven for each department : a Bishop, a Commander, a Prefect, a King’s Attorney, a President of the Court of Provosts, a Commander of Gendarmerie, and a Commander of the National Guards. Let these seven men be devoted to God and the King, and I will answer for the rest. . . .

‘ As to those men who have ability, but whose minds are warped by the Revolution, those men who cannot comprehend that the throne of St. Louis needs to be supported by the altar and encompassed by the old customs as well as the old traditions of monarchy, let them go and till their field. France may recall them when their talents, weary of being useless, are sincerely converted to religion and the Legitimate cause’.

This exclusive and purifying programme was set forth in *La Monarchie sous la Charte*. When we read this work to-day, we are tempted to regard it as a liberal constitutional treatise : that would be a great delusion and proof of an extreme innocence. In an article in the *Censeur*

euro péen at the time (vol. I, p. 236), M. Dunoyer criticized it very soundly. The first forty chapters of the book are devoted to expounding the principles of representative government, and these principles are in general the true orthodox, constitutional principles. But this preliminary treatise only hides the party weapon which comes forth in the second half. *La Monarchie selon la Charte* is no more than an Ultra-Royalist pamphlet in the form of a liberal catechism. It was merely a battering-ram intended to make a breach in the powers and invade them in the name of the purely Royalist faction.

In the whole of this part of his career (from 1815 to 1820), M. de Chateaubriand gave proof of great literary talent, of a white-heat passion, of a good amount of skill as a tactician, and he laboured more than any man at driving the Restoration out of the line of moderation and drawing it into those ways which were anything but the right mean. As long as Louis XVIII was alive, it was doubtful, however whether he and his party could have successfully invaded the powers, when the assassination of the Duc de Berry unexpectedly put an argument into his hand of which he made pitiless use. The man who has since boasted of never having had any affection for royal families, then displayed all the pomp of sensibility, decked himself in all the colours of the oriflamme, in order to exploit politically, and to the advantage of a party, that great monarchical affliction. The Decazes Ministry succumbed under the stroke: 'Those who were still striving against the public hatred, wrote Chateaubriand in a famous article in the *Conservateur* (March 3, 1820), were unable to resist the public grief. Our tears, our sighs, our sobs astonished an incautious minister: *his feet slipped in the blood*; he fell'.

Such words directed against a man so moderate as M. Decazes might appear atrocious. We must remember, however, that with writers we must always make allowance for a sounding phrase. I have been told by one of the men who were then on the staff of the *Conservateur* that Chateaubriand's sentence originally ran thus: '*His feet slipped in the blood, and he was carried away by the torrent of our tears*'. That was merely a very bad sentence; they hesitated to point it out to him. At last one of the members of the editorial committee who, not being a man

of Letters, seemed to arouse less suspicion as a critic, proposed to M. de Chateaubriand that he should strike out the latter part of the sentence, explaining that it would thus have a greater effect. The author consented, and instead of a ridiculous metaphor there was another insult, a cruel innuendo.

Having succeeded in getting into the ministry in which he was preceded by MM. de Villèle and Corbière, who had hitherto been of one mind with him, M. de Chateaubriand, during these seventeen months of office, inspired and brought to a successful issue an action the importance of which should be neither exaggerated nor diminished. The War in Spain, if one deigns to look at it within the frame and the particular conditions of the Restoration, was certainly not a contemptible undertaking, and, but for the faults which have since accumulated, the monarchy would have felt the good effects of it. Convinced that the military Genius is no other than the Genius of France, and flattering himself on having by its means reconciled the Restoration, M. de Chateaubriand considered this Spanish War as the greatest service he could have rendered the monarchy. It appeared to be to him in his political career what the *Génie du Christianisme* had been in his literary career; and so he called it his *René* in politics, that is to say his masterpiece. In short, he regarded it with an author's vanity, and a vanity so great that he was offended at not being complimented for it at Court before all others, whether ministers or generals, and from that moment became an intractable colleague. He could not imagine himself anything less than Prime Minister and President of the Council. *We can govern neither with him nor without him*, said M. de Villèle; they took the latter course, however, that of governing without him, and M. de Chateaubriand was dismissed without any consideration, on June 6, 1824¹.

From this day he returned to the opposition, and did

¹ It appears that Louis XVIII said at nine o'clock in the morning: *I do not wish to see that man again*. A council of ministers was to be held the same day. M. de Villèle only had time to send Chateaubriand notice of his dismissal, which did not find him at home. Whatever the explanation, it was an awkward thing for royalty that Chateaubriand, in the eyes of public opinion, appeared to have been, not dismissed, but driven from office.

not leave it again except for a moment, during the short ministry of M. de Martignac. Thus, from his resignation, after the murder of the Duc d'Enghien, until his death (1804-1848), he spent about forty-two years out of forty-four in opposition and in the sulks. That was his element. We may even say that during the last months of office he was already half in the opposition, since he conspired against the bill for the reduction of the interest on government stocks, not only by his silence, but by inciting the Archbishop of Paris to declare against its adoption in the Chamber of Peers. It is true that it was a question of finance, '*finance which I have always understood*', as he ingenuously says somewhere. We have seen that M. de Lamartine had the same pretension.

'With the French character, Chateaubriand had written in 1814, opposition is more to be feared than ministerial influence'. He undertook to prove it on many an occasion, and especially after 1824. He opened fire in the *Journal des Débats* with two magnificent articles, appearing on June 29 and July 6, in which he demonstrated that the present system followed by the ministry, and yesterday approved even by himself in its entirety, was as contrary to the genius of the nation as it was to that of our institutions and the spirit of the Charter. The adversaries, moved by so violent an attack, remarked 'that the author of these articles differed in no respects, in his opinions, from such and such writers in the *Minerve* and the *Constitutionnel*', and they were right. M. de Chateaubriand did not henceforth differ from the writers of the Liberal party except by a few phrases of pure Royalist courtesy scattered here and there, by a few shreds of a white plume waved about on occasion, and by the dazzling brilliancy of his talent.

Four years before, in that singular book, *Sur la Vie et la Mort de M. le Duc de Berry*, a truly fabulous work and quite inflated with Royalist sentimentality, he had said, concluding with an eloquent threat:

'Let us draw at least a useful lesson from our misfortune, and let it be as it were the moral of this work.

'There is rising up behind us a generation that is impatient of every yoke, hostile to all kings; it longs for a Republic and renders itself incapable, by its morals, of Republican virtues. It is advancing; it is pressing us hard; it is driving

us forward : soon it will take our place. Buonaparte might have been able to subdue these men by crushing them, by sending them to die on the field of battle, by presenting to their ardour the phantom of glory, and so prevent them from pursuing the phantom of liberty ; but we have only two things to oppose to the follies of these young men : the Legitimate cause escorted by all its memories, surrounded by the majesty of centuries ; the Representative Monarchy founded on the large landowners, defended by a vigorous aristocracy, strengthened by all the moral and religious powers. Whoever sees not this truth, sees nothing and is hastening to the abyss : outside of this truth all is theory, chimera, illusion'.

What was he doing now, in 1824 ? He was turning to that younger generation, and offering to lead them himself to the assault.

What was his desire ? What did Coriolanus desire ? to take his revenge before everything, to show that he was necessary, that he was to be dreaded, and that those who thought they could do without him had done themselves great injury. It was this thought of vengeance which suddenly made him so radically indifferent to things and persons, and which dispelled, as by enchantment, the intoxication of his factitious Royalism. Do you doubt it ? turn to the Preface of *La Monarchie selon la Charte*, in the edition of 1827 ; there he said, giving vent to the resentment of which he was full :

' In striking me, they have but struck a devoted servant of the King, and ingratitude thinks it is even with fidelity ; however, there may be men who are less submissive, and circumstances which it would be well not to abuse : history proves it. I am neither a Prince Eugène, nor a Voltaire, nor a Mirabeau ; and, even though I possessed their power, I should have a horror of imitating their resentment. But . . . '

And that is precisely what he was doing ; he was avenging himself, not like a statesman, but like an offended man of talent, and he was forcing his adversaries to repent. He was pleased to say of the Restoration, as Pascal said of man : I will *raise it*, I will *cast it down*, until it understands . . . that it could not do without me. He, who paraded his Christianity, felt indeed that there was nothing perfectly Christian in all this : *

' It would be better to be more humble, more prostrate, more Christian. Unfortunately we are subject to fail : we

have not the perfection preached by the Gospel. If a man struck us on one cheek, we should not offer the other; if he were a subject, we should have that man's life or he would have ours; *if he were a king! . . .*

He stopped. Let us finish the sentence for him: If he were a king, we should not rest until we had cast down his throne;—and he did all that was necessary, in fact, to carry out his thought.

Some admirable pages, brilliantly controversial, a few of them even full of truth, if we isolate them from what precedes and what inspires them, cannot disguise the results as a whole. After having, in the first half of his political life, urged the Restoration in the direction of Ultra-Royalism, M. de Chateaubriand in the second half, attacked it by a sudden *right-about-face* with all the forces of Liberalism grouped around him; and, in this duel where one man played the double part, it ended by going to pieces. It would very probably have gone to pieces without him, but he more than anybody can boast of having had a hand in it.

He does boast of it, in fact. What does it matter to him? he has had his share, what he particularly desired, the finest rôles, and the pleasure of sneering at them, and saying that he might have played a much finer one if he had wished. He was the leader in all the great monarchical and popular discussions of his time; he led them as one usually leads things in this country of France, that is to say beside the pot and to anything but a good issue. But, once again, what does that matter to him? He heard himself applauded every morning, on both sides; he had the fanfares of both camps.

On the fall of the Restoration M. de Chateaubriand, with his love for playing fine parts, thought he owed it to himself to remain faithful to it, at the same time proclaiming, in the funeral oration that he delivered over it in the Chamber of Peers, that it had ruined itself by *the conspiracy of hypocrisy and stupidity*. 'After all, he wrote of the elder branch, it is a fallen monarchy; and many others will fall! *We owed it only our fidelity: it has that*'. And he never ceased to say hard things about it, whilst crying out his oaths of allegiance. That is too much. It reminds me exactly of a crabbed and cross-grained woman, Socrates' Xantippe, if you like, who, on the strength of

being a faithful and honourable wife, tells her husband in every key that she does not love him, and treats him like a slave. Is that not the way in which M. de Chateaubriand treated his kings? The kings, on the other hand, showed great good nature; they suffered and forgot everything, and the good Charles X on these occasions resembled Socrates.

Since the publication of the *Congrès de Vérone* and the *Memoirs*, that point of view which bears upon the character itself has appeared to us in its full light, and the author has carefully brought all the weaknesses of the man into prominence. If M. de Chateaubriand had not written this political part of his *Memoirs*, and if he had left it to the public memory to complete his narrative, it would no doubt have found him guilty of some very abrupt deviations and inconsistencies; but the greatness of his talent, the chivalry of certain of his actions, the historic beauty of certain of his views, would at that distance have covered many faults; a certain air of generosity would have survived in the memory, and people would never have dared to penetrate to that extent into the pettiness of his motives and intentions. The public imagination, in tolerable agreement with his faults, would, on the contrary, have defended and exalted them. To-day there is no possibility of doing so, and never did a Memoir-writer who posed do more to belittle himself. Those, however, who are still fond of fine phrases, of beautiful detached thoughts, of specious fragments of theory, of empty and striking predictions, of poetic fancies, and making collections of them, will find ample matter to satisfy their taste in his works; but the minds that demand continuity, reason, purpose, some consistency in action and conduct, will henceforth know what value to attach to the eminent writer who, with such high qualities, was in politics no more than a great, always *personal* polemist, and a brilliant agent of disunion. If we had room to spare, it would be curious to show him as he appears in this political part of the *Memoirs*, always pretending to be superior to his theme, scoffing, in his narrative, at the most serious things as insipid and prosaic, and pretending to belittle the conflicts in which he was then so ardently engaged. A poet in public affairs, take care! he is always like a nobleman in commerce: he thinks himself above

his trade, and a moment will come when, if he is crossed, he will draw his parchments from his pocket and play the gentleman lording it over his villeins.

In speaking of the private conferences and meetings which preceded the entry of MM. de Villèle and Corbière into the Council, and of which he was one of the chief promoters, M. de Chateaubriand delights in drawing caricatures, more or less grotesque, of his colleagues; he exhibits the bald heads of all those *untidy Solons*: 'It was assuredly very venerable, he says, but I preferred the swallow that awoke me in my youth, and the Muses that filled my dreams'. And he continues to sport with these images of the swan and the dawn. Once again, it is all very well to prefer the swallows and the bees, but in that case you must refrain from watching over nations and their interests, and not pretend to govern them. Shall I say it? delightful and adorable as these poetic things are in a soul that has remained virginal and sweetly intoxicated, the more revolting are they when they only appear in the guise of contempt cast upon interests which are, after all, serious and sacred, since they are the interests of society itself. When you have gained your experience and come to the end of your miscalculations, it is too late to say: 'What cared I for those vanities and futilities, I who never believed in the time I was living in, I who belonged to the past, I who had no faith in kings, no convictions with regard to the people, I who never troubled myself about anything, excepting dreams, on condition, however, that they last no more than a night! . . .' Poor dreams, it is very fortunate for them! And your religion, if you please, what has become of it? You have forgotten it this time by inadvertence, even in your dreams. And society! you forget it likewise, you reduce it to a cipher, though for nearly twenty years you solicited the honour of guiding it! But this society has a right at least to expect some seriousness in the ambition of those who would be its guides and pilots.

NOTE.

At the moment when this article was being written, the English newspapers were publishing the Codicil to Sir Robert Peel's will, which concerns the publication of his Memoirs and State papers. It shows up in striking contrast the difference between the conduct of a real statesman and that of a

literary politician, the one bringing discretion and maturity to the consideration of all things, the other hastening to divulge prematurely whatever he thinks calculated to exalt himself, without any concern for the conveniences of government or individuals. This Codicil of Sir Robert Peel is in fact the most obvious criticism of the conduct which dictated the publication of the *Congrès de Vérone*. This is the text:

'I give and bequeath to the Hon. Philip Henry Stanhope, Viscount Mahon, and to Edward Cardwell, of Whitehall, Member of Parliament, my executors, etc., all the unpublished letters, papers and documents, public or private, printed or in manuscript, of which I may be possessed at my death. Seeing that these papers and letters contain all my confidential Correspondence, which goes back to 1812; that, during a considerable part of that period, I was employed in the service of the Crown, or took an active part in Parliamentary affairs; that it is very probable that this Correspondence may be of interest and serve to throw some light upon the conduct and character of both men and events of that period, I give to my executors full power to choose from that Correspondence what they may think proper to publish; I leave them to judge of the opportuneness of such publication, quite convinced that they will exercise uncommon discretion; that they will not betray any confidential communications which may not be honourable, nor unnecessarily offend any private feelings, nor endanger any public interest by an indiscreet or premature publication. I recommend them especially to publish no part of my Correspondence with H.M. Queen Victoria or H.R.H. Prince Albert during the lifetime of either of them without previously communicating with their Majesties, and receiving their sanction to publish all or part of that Correspondence.

'I authorize my executors to publish such documents as may appear to them of interest to the public, and even to sell them, but on condition that they do so with the greatest discretion, without offending against the laws of loyalty and equity, and whilst exercising that discretion with sufficient latitude to make it possible to consult those documents, gratuitously, whenever they may think right and profitable. . . . I give them power to destroy those papers which they think ought to be destroyed, etc., etc'. (*Re-transcription.*)

Now open *Le Congrès de Vérone*, published during the author's lifetime, and the *Memoirs* published on the morrow of his death, and judge the difference of the two *minds*.

NOTES

Page 6, line 18. 'How rare is a virtue that can resist for ever!'

Page 6, line 23. 'Who can trust a poet to keep his word for a single moment? Prudence was not made for those who have converse with the Muses; though they possess the arts of pleasing and of uttering sweet words, to be trustworthy is not in their province.' (La Fontaine, *La Clochette*.)

Page 9, line 18 from bottom. 'If you would have me love you still, give me back the age of love. . .'

Page 13, line 3. 'It is and should be all, if it were not finite'.

Page 20, line 8. '. . . Why this attire between thy kisses and my charms?'

Page 20, line 15. 'If you could complain, ingrate, that my desires are ill to appease, I could at least deaden them with the wine which aroused them'.

Page 20, line 14 from bottom. 'Thou thinkest to acquire the glory of Pindus, when its laurels, still hot from thy thunder, hide thee from history at the price of gold, or sweep the mire of the dungeons. . .'

Page 21, line 3 from bottom. 'The Beggars, the Beggars, are happy folk, they love each other, etc. . .'

Page 22, line 5. 'Many a noble is punished by exile for his dazzling pomp. . . . The palace's splendour strikes your view, but groaning ennui dwells therein'.

Page 22, line 12. 'What God is it that delights to frolic on this truckle-bed that he decks with flowers? It is Cupid paying his visit to laughing Poverty'.

Page 22, line 20. 'At the turn of the limpid stream that winds under the fresh lilac shrubs, you have seen our cottage. . .'

Page 20, line 25. 'The light pattering hail-stones rebounding from the noisy window-panes'.

Page 20, line 29. 'On Hymettus I woke the bees'.

Page 23, line 3. 'Thy amiable presence at my bedside will not be without fruit for thy happiness'.

Page 23, line 7. 'At my side you will spend peaceful days; a thousand ornaments shall set off thy charms. Love through them has restored to me his power'.

Page 23, line 12 from bottom. 'The field flower smartens up thy button-hole . . .' 'These days of mingled sunshine and rain . . .'

Page 23, line 6 from bottom. 'Though Fate should wage new battles with thy threadbare stuff'.

Page 23, line 3 from bottom. 'Thy poverty, which is my honour, has not banished me from their arms'.

Page 24, line 6. 'Was he ever guilty of a spiteful thrust? With pride you will answer: Never!' On comparison of the two poems, there seems to be no doubt that Béranger borrowed the idea of his song from Ronsard's Sonnet, beginning:

Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir à la chandelle,
Assise auprès du feu, dévidant et filant,
Direz chantant mes vers, en vous émerveillant:
Ronsard me célébrait du temps que j'étais belle.

Page 24, line 19 from bottom. 'In the pride of his fortune a conqueror played with sceptres and laws; and the dust of his feet may be still seen imprinted on the frontlet of kings. You all cringed, O Kings who are deified! I will defy such exacting masters, and with goblet in hand will gaily trust to the God of the poor'.

Page 24, line 6 from bottom. 'Over our ruins England bids us defiance'.

Page 24, line 2 from bottom. 'O Cherubs with puffed cheeks, awaken then the sluggish dead!'

Page 27, line 2 from bottom. 'Arms, head and heart, all were people in him'.

Page 28, line 14. 'O ye who dread slavery yourselves, refuse your tender warblings to those nobles who, from age to age, enslave their fellows'.

Page 28, line 23. 'Let Philomela come to my prison bars! She too owed her troubles to a king'.

Page 29, line 3 from bottom. *Nothing, not even an Academician*; an allusion to Piron's epitaph on himself:

Ci-gît Piron, qui ne fut rien,
Pas même Académicien.

Page 33. In a note at the end of the article on Béranger, in reply to an article by M. de Pontmartin, commending Sainte-Beuve for the immense service he had rendered to literature and morality by *attaching the bell* to Béranger's fame, Sainte-Beuve says:

'On Béranger then I declare in all sincerity that I have said, and that very clearly, what I think, all that I think, and that to add another word, unfavourable to the illustrious poet, is to go not only beyond my thought, but against my thought.

'In literature as in politics there are shades and limits. One goes so far and no farther. One approves of 1789, one does not on that account approve of 1793, and for the very reason that one does not approve of the former. One belongs to the *Right Centre* and one does not on that account belong to the *Chambre introuvable* of 1815. I speak to M. de Pontmartin the language that he is familiar with, and that he likes.

'I love sincerity in everything, and I do not love poses. It was because there was some little pose in Béranger's conduct that I took the liberty of pointing out a few piquant contradictions; nothing more'.

Page 43, line 1. *Bélisaire*; a novel of moral and political tendencies by Marmontel, published in 1767, whose appearance caused a great outcry among the orthodox. The Sorbonne called loudly for its suppression on account of its *terrible blasphemies*. Marmontel had suggested among other things that God will not refuse the pagan heroes admission into heaven!

Page 69, line 1. Another René, i.e. Chateaubriand.

Page 75, line 17 from bottom. Chevalier des Grieux; see *Manon Lescaut*. Chevalier de Grammont; see Hamilton's *Mémoires de Grammont*.

Page 80, line 1. Gongora (1561-1627), the Spanish poet, who wrote a *Polyphemus and Galatea*, the style of which is somewhat as follows: 'His black locks, undulating imitators of the dark waters of Lethe, fly in

disorder, and fall without symmetry at the will of the tempestuous winds that comb them. His beard is an impetuous torrent which, arid son of the mountain, inundated his breast, ill or tardily or vainly furrowed by the fingers of his hand'.

Page 100, line 16. Fieschi's attempted assassination of Louis-Philippe and his suite by an infernal machine on July 28, 1830, to which many fell victims.

Page 135, line 14 from bottom. Bicêtre, a hospital for the mentally afflicted near Paris.

Page 141, line 20. 'There is more than one month for the roses, and all the roses are sisters'.—'Fair ladies, who form your plans, thirty is for you the best age; your charms are not smaller, and you make better use of them: that is the right time for happiness; one pleases as much, one loves better. Little girls of fifteen, make room for your mammas!'

Page 147, line 10. Léopold Robert, a painter of Roman subjects (1794-1835); a man of a despondent nature, and, although some of his works are hung in the Louvre, always dissatisfied with his own work. He *abdicated* by committing suicide at Venice, his reason and health having been disturbed by an unfortunate love for the Princess Charlotte Bonaparte.

Page 152, line 3. 'Noble sentiments rising from these pages, like perfumes from the balmy shores'.

Page 157, line 13. *Napoléone*; a satiric ode by Charles Nodier, which circulated in manuscript about 1803, and had a great success in Republican and Monarchical salons. Somebody having printed it without the author's consent, the latter suffered a short imprisonment.

Page 159, line 20. Blue Ribbon (*Cordon bleu*), of the Order of the Holy Ghost.

Page 162, line 10 from bottom. *L'Ermite de la Chaussée d'Antin*; a periodical somewhat analogous to Addison's *Spectator*, started in 1812 by de Jouy.

Page 162, line 2 from bottom. Mayeux; a creation of the caricaturist Charles Traviers, intended to symbolize the vanity and stupidity of the petty Paris bourgeois. Mayeux was not an attractive type; he was represented as a hunchback with a red nose and thick lips, a glutton and drunkard, of loose morals and religion, but a zealous patriot and *Garde-National*.

Page 174, line 2. An interesting picture by Nicolas de Largillière in the Wallace Collection, contains the portraits of four generations of Louis, the youngest of whom, the future Louis XV, is literally held *in leading strings* by Madame de Maintenon.

Page 176, line 15 from bottom. 'He can love, he can fight; he sends to that fair retreat a patent worthy of Henri IV, signed Louis, Mars and Cupid'.

Page 177, line 4. 'It was said that the son of Cytherea had lost his life near the Lignon; but I have seen him in the solitary wood where the young Pompadour is wont to dream'.

Page 177, line 16. 'All will change: the crimes of a fickle one will no more be exalted as exploits; Modesty alone will gain our respect; constant Love will resume his rights. An example is set by the greatest of kings, and by the chastest of beauties'.

Page 177, footnote. 'Wherever you go, by day and by night, you are followed by piety, faith, virtue, chastity, honour. . .'

Page 178, line 9. An allusion to Watteau's masterpiece, *L'Embarquement pour Cythère*, which is in the Royal Palace at Berlin; the picture in the Paris Louvre is a first sketch.

Page 196, line 18. *On the fleurs-de-lis*, i.e. whilst occupying a high judicial office.

Page 97, line 13. *La Journée du 20 Juin* (1792) was an episode in the French Revolution, a preliminary to the 10th August.

Page 198, line 7 from bottom.

Parbleu, dit le meunier, est bien fou de cerveau
Qui prétend contenter tout le monde et son père.

'Zounds! said the miller, he is a fool who tries to satisfy all the world and its father'. (La Fontaine, *Fables*, III, 1.) In the quotation read: *one's father*.

Page 210, line 13 from bottom. *Solatia luctus exigua ingentis, misero sed debita patri*, a scanty comfort in a mighty sorrow, yet due to the wretched father. (Virgil, *Æneid*, XI, 62.)

Page 218, line 19 from bottom. 'O woman, mortal angel, divine creation, the only ray that for a single

moment illumines this life ! At this hour, this hour of truth I say it, as I should have said it when in presence of beauty, my swelling heart, bursting into bloom, melted like snow in the beams of the rising sun, I regret nothing in this world but you ! '

' When you wither on the heart which loves you, when this heart even withers and dries up ; when the divine spark which still smoulders within us, is powerless to rekindle the flame quenched in you, when no heart beats any more in response to our sighs, . . . then, as a spirit banished from its heavenly sphere weeping resigns itself to the gloom of this earth, we, tearing from your steps our eyes dim with tears, devote our hearts to the false blessings of this life '.

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